

SUMMER 2020

# RALLY

MAGAZINE

## FIND YOUR WAY

Well-Being  
in the New  
Normal



Dealing With  
COVID-Era Feelings

See a Doctor Without  
Stepping Outside

Surviving the Strain  
of a Crowded House

Cook Once,  
Eat for a Week



# Let's Stay Healthy, Together



Rally Health is here to support you during these challenging times.  
We hope you enjoy the well-being tips, resources, and recipes  
in this issue of Rally Magazine.

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## ON THE COVER

When we started work on a magazine about staying healthy through a pandemic, we sought a cover image that showed a new perspective on well-being. A picture of beauty and adventure, even as we're stuck inside — perseverance in the face of challenges.

We were inspired by [Erin Sullivan's #OurGreatIndoors](#) series. Sullivan, a nature and travel photographer in normal times, found a new perspective during the stay-at-home order. She made scenes from objects like food, fabric, and figurines.

These images capture the moment with whimsical depictions of people exploring natural landscapes.

For our cover, Sullivan created a coastal forest from young eucalyptus jutting above a tin-foil sea. A lamp behind a sheet was the sun. "I picture the figures jumping from leaf to leaf in order to get a view, with the occasional canoe passing by," Sullivan said. It's a hopeful metaphor for finding your way through challenging times while living a healthy, fun life.

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# 5 Ways to Cut Stress From Your WFH Day

Working from home more? A little prep can help take the stress out of your workday. Here are some tips.

BY KATE ROCKWOOD

## 1 ORGANIZE YOUR HOME OFFICE

Lea McLeod, a career consultant and executive coach at enigmaFIT, recommends setting up an easy filing system, so all work-related papers, books, and technology are at your fingertips. If you have to do frequent video calls, McLeod suggests setting up in a space with a neutral background and decent lighting.

"A dedicated space will get you into the mental framework of working at home," she says. "You'll still feel like you're going to the office."



## 4 STAY CONNECTED

"When you work from home, there's no natural water cooler," Swody says. Set up chat rooms to check in with co-workers about things that aren't work related, like sharing pictures of pets or other mood boosters.

McLeod is a fan of using messaging or phone calls, rather than email, which feels more formal. Video is even better. "We get more context and cues out of seeing somebody smile or seeing when they're worried," says Swody.



## 2 CREATE A SCHEDULE — AND STICK TO IT

Without a regular cadence to your day, you risk slipping into "weekend mode," which can make it hard to focus, stay productive, and unplug, says Cathleen Swody, PhD, organizational psychologist and founding partner at Thrive Leadership. Over time, that can increase your stress.

Try putting on fresh clothes every morning, working set hours, and taking regular breaks. Shut down your computer at quitting time, "so you don't feel like you're always at the office," says McLeod.



## 3 PRIORITIZE TASKS

"Don't just wake up, turn on the computer and start answering emails," says Swody. "Ask yourself, 'What do I absolutely, positively have to do today so that I can go to sleep tonight?'"

Writing down your high-priority tasks not only builds momentum and productivity; a list of completed tasks can give you a sense of accomplishment and calm, Swody says. That's a great feeling to have at the end of the day.

## 5 BE MINDFUL

A disrupted work routine and alarming headlines might have your stress soaring. Don't try to bulldoze past those big emotions, says Swody. Instead, incorporate little stress relievers throughout the day.

"It takes just a few seconds before a meeting to take five deep breaths and close your eyes to get centered," she says. Physical activity or yoga may also help decrease stress, so you can get down to work — like a boss.



Stressed out?

[Rally has resources to help you de-stress, get good sleep, and feel better.](#)



# Got 12 Minutes? Try This Workout



High-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts that alternate bursts of heart-pounding movement with lower-intensity activity are “short, sweet, and efficient,” says Minnesota-based coach **Mara Ruttger, NASM-CPT**, above. The key to doing them right is pushing yourself hard, but not so hard you flame out too soon. “You want to hit a seven out of 10,” Ruttger says, “if 10 is your max effort.”

Here, Ruttger suggests three exercises that can be tackled as a simple HIIT circuit. With each move, complete as many reps as you can within 30 seconds; follow with 30 seconds of rest (or longer, if you’re new to this sort of exercise and need it to recover). Do each move twice before proceeding to the next. Complete the circuit twice for a 12-minute sweat session that strengthens muscles from head to toe.

## Can't quite handle these?

For modified versions of these moves, [click here](#).\*



## SQUAT WITH CROSSOVER CRUNCH

- 1 Stand with feet hip-width apart, toes pointed forward.
- 2 With hands behind your head and elbows wide, squat down, pushing hips back until your thighs are parallel to the ground.
- 3 As you return to standing, lift your left leg off the floor, twist at the waist, and bring your right elbow toward your left knee.
- 4 Set the left leg down, and return to starting position. Repeat the squat and crossover crunch on the other side.

## PUSHUP

- 1 Start on all fours, positioning hands slightly wider than your shoulders.
- 2 Enter a plank position by straightening arms and legs. Contract your core and quadriceps, ensuring your head is aligned with your spine.
- 3 Lower down slowly, bringing your chest to the floor, with arms and elbows bent at a 90-degree angle.
- 4 Pause, then push up and return to starting position. Repeat.



## BIRD DOG

- 1 Start on the floor in a tabletop position with hands and knees on the floor. Position palms directly beneath your shoulders, bend your knees at 90 degrees, and flex your feet.
- 2 Lift and slowly extend your left arm and your right leg at the same time.
- 3 Return to starting position. Repeat on the other side.



# Cook Once, Eat for a Week

By Carolyn Williams, PhD, RD

Prepping a big-batch meal that guarantees leftovers can save you time on days when you just don't feel like cooking. These family-friendly, make-ahead meals freeze well or hold in the fridge. Making dinner doesn't get easier than this.

## CHICKEN ENCHILADA CASSEROLE

Move over, Taco Tuesday: There's a new Mexican dinner favorite in town. This easy dish makes a handy, quick lunch when reheated and served over a bed of crisp greens. You can freeze it, too. Thaw when you're strapped for time or need a night off from cooking.

[Get the recipe](#) →



## TORTELLINI, WHITE BEAN, AND SPINACH SOUP

I know I've got a winning dish on my hands whenever my kids forget they're eating their vegetables. Featuring a rich tomato broth, this soup also happens to be one of the easiest big-batch recipes you can whip up to refrigerate or freeze for later.

[Get the recipe](#) →



## LEMONY CHICKEN SOUP

Lemon juice adds a burst of freshness to this creamy yet dairy-free soup. Breast meat from a rotisserie chicken keeps the prep quick. Fresh herbs and mirepoix (the onions, carrots, and celery combo) add flavor without excess sodium, and whole-grain orzo boosts this dish's fiber content — good for both your heart and your waistline.

[Get the recipe](#) →



Craving more delicious,  
healthy, easy-to-make meals?

[Find more recipes and nutrition info here.](#)





### MEDITERRANEAN QUINOA SALAD

Tossed in a simple red wine vinaigrette, this hearty, filling grain-based salad has staying power: It'll hold in your fridge for up to five days without getting soggy. I make a batch at the start of a busy week to serve as a side, or topped with grilled shrimp or chicken for a fast, healthy lunch or dinner.

[Get the recipe](#) →



### BAKED PENNE WITH ROASTED VEGETABLES

This cheesy pasta casserole is classic comfort food similar to lasagna. But it's a lot healthier — and quicker to prepare, too — thanks to a few simple ingredient swaps. Everyone at my house is happy to see this baked penne on the dinner table. Myself included, because I know it'll yield enough leftovers for another meal or two.

[Get the recipe](#) →





# How to See a Doctor Without Leaving Home

## Get the most out of your virtual visit

By Kate Rockwood

From streaming the latest movies to ordering Latvian takeout, you can do a staggering number of things without leaving your couch. You can also talk with a doctor without stepping outside. That's convenient anytime, but especially these days.

Even when you're socially distancing, routine health visits may still be necessary. Virtual visits give you access to health care without any contact. Typically you're connected to providers through secure video or phone calls, using your mobile phone or computer.

If you want to try a virtual visit, you might have access through your provider, your insurance, or a telehealth company. Taking advantage of virtual visits might be less expensive, too.

## THE WHEN AND WHY

Medical emergencies — say, a suspected heart attack or a broken bone — are not what virtual visits are designed for. But even some nonemergency issues may require an in-person visit, for a physical exam or certain tests.

Virtual visits can be used for consultations, follow-ups, chronic condition management, and medication management. If you're unsure whether your symptoms require an in-person visit (or even a visit to an urgent care center), a quick telehealth consultation can also get you an expert opinion on the

appropriate care path, says Joseph Brennan, telehealth consultant at Moonshot Health Consulting. If you believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19, and have nonemergency symptoms, the CDC advises to start by calling your primary care provider.

Many specialists also talk to patients by video or phone, including psychiatrists, dermatologists, and neurologists. Research suggests that the smart use of virtual visits may improve health outcomes, without sacrificing patient satisfaction.

## THE HOW

Start by calling your primary care physician, they might be able to schedule virtual visits directly. If not, head to your health insurance website to get a sense of your options. You might have access to direct-to-consumer telemedicine — with a range of on-call physical and mental health providers.

Virtual visits often take the form of a live video conference, which works in many ways like a regular visit. The doctor and patient can talk live about symptoms and

health concerns, and providers can even prescribe medications.

To get the most out of your virtual visit, set yourself up in a private space, to minimize distractions and help you feel comfortable sharing health details with a provider, says Brennan. Put your laptop or mobile device on a level surface, to decrease wobbling and shaking. And make sure you appear well-lit on the screen, which helps your doctor see you and potentially verify symptoms.





## THE FOLLOW-UP

Depending on your coverage, virtual visits can be even more cost-effective than heading to an in-person visit. A 2019 study in the American Journal of Emergency Medicine found that people saved between \$19 and \$121, on average, when using telemedicine. Both Medicare and Medicaid usually pay for some telehealth services, depending on the circumstances.

It's important to update your primary physician about any diagnosis, treatments, or medications from another provider. Virtual visits should complement — not conflict with — the ongoing care you get from your regular doctor.



Rally can help you find the right provider, schedule visits, and manage your bills — all from the palm of your hand. [See if Rally is available to you.](#)

## Stay Safe on the Go

This summer may have a different feel, but you can still go out and have fun. Before you do, know your COVID-19 risk factors and how it's spreading near you. Here's how to reduce your risk.

### WEAR A MASK



Covering your nose and mouth with a cloth mask may slow the spread of the virus. Wear them in public settings where it's hard to keep your distance, like stores and gas stations.

### MAINTAIN DISTANCE



Stay at least 6 feet away from others, and avoid large groups and crowded spots. Handshakes are canceled, at least for a while. Try a friendly wave instead.

### WASH YOUR HANDS



You know the drill: 20 seconds with soap and water. Use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when you can't get to a sink.

### CHOOSE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES



Indoor spaces are riskier than outdoor spaces. The more ventilation the better.

### PICK RESTAURANTS WISELY



The lowest-risk dining options are those that only offer drive-through, delivery, takeout, and curbside pickup. Distanced outdoor dining adds some risk, and spaced indoor seating adds more.

### USE TOUCHLESS PAYMENTS



Use your phone to pay, or pay online for delivery or curbside pickup. Bring your own pen if you pay by credit card.



# 7 WAYS TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOUR FINANCES

It's natural to be fearful or overwhelmed by the big, sweeping economic changes happening around us, says Shannah Compton Game, a certified financial planner and host of the Millennial Money Podcast. **"But taking action — even a small step — can help move you out of that place of fear."**

BY KATE ROCKWOOD

## 1 TAKE INVENTORY

If you make it to the end of most months with very little money left in your checking account, you might assume you need your full paycheck to survive. But for many people not living on a tight budget, there's fat to trim out of your day-to-day spending, says Compton Game. And it's helpful to know what your baseline budget is: the amount that you need to cover expenses that you absolutely have to pay. "That's things like rent or mortgage, car payments, and basic groceries," she says.

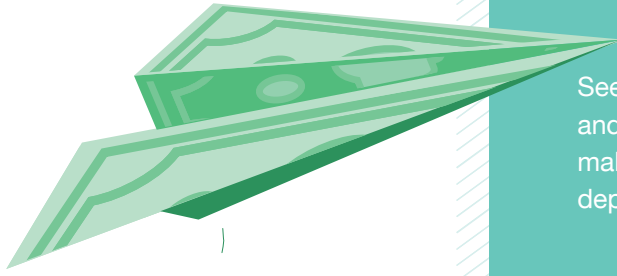
Figuring out that number is as simple as reviewing the last two to three months of bank statements, and tallying any figures that are essential. Seeing that you could live on, say, 60% of your paycheck can be a big stress reliever if you're facing uncertain times ahead.

## 2 PRESS PAUSE WHERE YOU CAN

While you've got those bank statements handy, go ahead and highlight any services or expenses that you can live without or are unlikely to use in the near future. Depending on your finances, you might want to put your accounts on hold or even cancel them outright. Maybe TV streaming is essential during the pandemic, but you might want to press pause on your gym membership, magazine subscription, or take-out budget.

Recurring expenses are especially great to cut, Compton Game says, because those savings stick around month after month. (See "Stop These Money Leaks" on page 11 for more ways to save.)





# Worried About Your 401(k)?

## Your Next Move May Depend on Your Age

Seeing volatility in your 401(k)? That's no reason to panic and stop contributions. But it doesn't mean you shouldn't make any changes. What drives your next move may depend on your age. **BY JENNIFER THOMAS**

### IF YOU'RE IN YOUR...

# 30s

If you're 30-something or younger, keep making your 401(k) contributions if you can afford it, says Justin Pritchard, a certified financial adviser with Approach Financial. "Prices are lower now than before the crisis," he says.

Jonathan Bird, a certified financial planner and CEO of Farnam Financial, recommends looking at a Target-Date Retirement Fund, if it's available, which automatically starts shifting your allocations toward bonds the older you get.

# 40s

# 50s

Now is the time to increase contributions if you can, says Silvia Manent, a certified financial adviser and founder of Manent Capital. You're also eligible to make catch-up contributions to your 401(k) and IRA.

Time to protect your nest egg. If you need your retirement funds in the next year or two, Pritchard says, you may want to de-risk your portfolio with safer assets like short-term government bonds, money markets, and CDs.

# 60s

### 3 GET HELP

The pandemic has triggered a small wave of relief programs aimed at those in need, including the stimulus checks that went out in the spring.

Other relief measures included expanded unemployment benefits that cover self-employed and gig workers, low-interest loans and lines of credit available from banks, and credit card companies temporarily halting payment dates. But relief doesn't come automatically — you typically have to ask, points out Compton Game.

For unemployment benefits, visit your [state's local site](#) for up-to-date info. [The American Bankers Association is maintaining a list](#) of banks' responses to the current crisis. Check first with the banks you already belong to, as they may be more willing to offer payment assistance or fast-track a loan for their existing customers. And many counties, cities, and states are also offering financial help programs. (The [National Governors Association](#) [has a list](#) of resources by state.

#### 4 GET YOUR PAPERWORK IN ORDER

Now is a great time to get your finances organized, says Compton Game. “Create a list of those money tasks that you’ve always wanted to do but haven’t had time for,” she says.

It’s also a great idea to get a head start on estate planning, if you haven’t already, says Compton Game. Though this may sound about as appealing as a voluntary root canal, getting your future under control can help you feel better today. There are many, many online sites, such as [NOLO](#) or [Tomorrow](#), that have tools to help you create a simple will and financial power of attorney without leaving your couch and for less than a week’s worth of fancy lattes. (And if you do get sick, having your financial house in order will be one less thing to worry about.)

#### 5 JUMP-START YOUR SAVINGS

To get the most out of this money, look for a high-yield savings account, Compton Game says. She suggests checking out the fee-free savings options at [Ally Bank](#), [Capital One 360](#), [Marcus by Goldman Sachs](#), and [Synchrony Bank](#), which all offer higher-than-average returns. If it’s with a different bank than your other financial accounts, even better: You’ll be less tempted to dip into it for non-emergencies.

If you want to stoke your savings even faster, set up (or ramp up) automatic deposits through your work, which means a portion of each paycheck will head straight to your emergency savings. Even \$50 per paycheck can add up, says Tara Unverzagt, a certified financial planner and founder of South Bay Financial Partners in Torrance, California.

#### 6 GET PRO ADVICE — FOR FREE!

A financial planner can offer objective, specialized advice on what your next steps should be. Your employee assistance program (EAP) can be a great place to start — EAPs often offer free counseling services, as well as other resources for dealing with hardship or emergencies.

Many members of the [XY Planning Network](#) are offering free financial planning services to those impacted by COVID-19. Ditto the [Financial Planning Association](#) and the [National Association of Personal Financial Advisors](#), both of which maintain lists of volunteer certified financial planners.



No one step will put you back on steady footing... every proactive step you take is a move in the right direction.”

## STOP THESE MONEY LEAKS

5 ways to keep more of your money

BY KATE ROCKWOOD



#### FOOD WASTE

Americans waste nearly a pound of food per person each day, and by some estimates a family of four can lose \$1,500 a year, or more. To stretch your grocery budget, organize your meals so your family is eating the most perishable items first, says Wendy Bazilian, PhD, RD.

#### LATE FEES

A late credit card bill can set you back up to \$35. A late mortgage payment can cost hundreds. If bills tend to slip your mind, enroll in auto-pay. If you just can’t afford to pay on time, reach out to the lender. Many are temporarily waiving late fees and lowering minimum payments.





## 7 STUDY UP

We're not one to knock a movie marathon, if that's what gets you through these times. But if you've ever wanted to better understand how the financial markets work or wrap your head around retirement planning or dive deep into the psychology of spending, well, now might be a great opportunity to fill your free time with financial literacy.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has information and [guides for major money decisions](#), and has [updated them in response to the pandemic](#). The National Credit Union

Association can point you to a bevy of [online learning options](#). If you don't have the attention span for a personal finance book at the moment, consider a podcast, such as Planet Money, So Money, or HerMoney. Post-pandemic, we're betting dividends and opportunity costs make for some fascinating brunch topics.

No one step will put you back on steady footing. But every proactive step you take is a move in the right direction.



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### FORGOTTEN FSA DOLLARS

If you have a flexible spending account (FSA), make sure to use those funds before you lose them. Typical FSAs can be used for a wide variety of health care needs, like copays, prescription medications, and over-the-counter drugs. And it's pretax money, so it'll go further.

### INSURANCE YOU DON'T USE

"If you are not driving your car right now you may not need full coverage," says Elaine King, a certified financial planner and founder of Family and Money Matters. Check to see if your insurance company offers a pay-per-mile insurance option, or ask about a partial refund.

### EXPIRING REWARDS

It's common to sign up for cash back rewards on your credit card and then let them sit. Now is the time to tap into them, King says. Redeem any rewards piling up in your account to help you pay down your credit card debt or give your grocery budget a cushion.





## SURVIVING THE STRAIN OF A CROWDED HOUSE

**Learn how to make the most of all this family time, without starting to loathe each other.**

By Barbara Brody

**B**ack in pre-pandemic times, Jenna and her husband spent most of the week in different orbits: She worked from home

while supervising their two young children; he was out of the house for at least 12 hours a day for his high-stress job in New York finance. They relished frequent date nights but also enjoyed separate outings with their own friends. Since the stay-at-home orders, however, that's all changed.

"There's a lot of 'Why did you do it that way?'" says Jenna, who asked that we use only her first name to protect her family's privacy. She resents having to explain things, like why she steps away from the sink with the water on. (She's waiting for it to heat up.) She also misses having evenings to herself, when she got most of her work done. "I didn't get married to see my husband every second of every day."

Jenna and her husband are faring well enough under the strain — she says he's a great dad and still considers them to be happily married. Some relationships are even thriving. Annie Warshaw, who runs a yoga-based empowerment program for kids in Chicago, says that this period has been surprisingly good. "Something clicked during quarantine.

We do not bicker; we just enjoy each other," she says. "He's taken on more of the 'mental load' that tends to fall on women."

But some relationships have crumbled under the pressure. "I had a couple recently break up over how to cook eggs," says Moe Gelbart, PhD, director of practice development for Community Psychiatry in Torrance, California.

It wasn't really about the eggs. "Spending so much time together has a way of magnifying whatever previously existed in the relationship," says Gelbart.

There's no shortage of stressors on relationships these days. Striving to strengthen your bond can be worth it. Good relationships are associated with a range of potential health benefits, including a lower risk of heart disease, depression, and age-related cognitive decline.

The flip side can be extremely detrimental: Researchers from Brigham Young University determined that social isolation and loneliness may be as harmful as obesity.

Of course, the COVID-19 era has people feeling more isolated than ever. So how do you preserve your most valued relationships? Here's what the experts advise.

## Strengthening Romantic Bonds

**Open lines of communication.** If you repress your feelings they'll fester and you may end up exploding later. When your partner expresses discontent, acknowledge that their feelings are valid, whatever they might be, says Scott Braithwaite, PhD, an associate professor at Brigham Young University and creator of ePrep, a marriage-strengthening program. At the same time, know when things are getting too heated: Braithwaite says it's OK to call a "timeout" as long as whoever asks for the pause takes responsibility for bringing the topic back up in the not-too-distant future.

**Keep a schedule.** Consistency is really important for mental well-being, which trickles down to how you interact with your partner, says Braithwaite. That means waking up and going to bed the same time every day, having set meal times, and getting regular exercise. It's also wise to build in some alone time; take a solo walk outside or escape for an extra-long shower once a day if at all possible, he says.

**Maintain intimacy.** Sex is just part of it, says Gelbart. Sitting on the couch binge-watching Netflix while you hold hands counts, too. "Our marriage has sweetened and gotten deeper," says Hope Griffin, who lives with her husband in Canon City, Colorado. "Because we're less busy, we're able to share more meals, and we have had ample time to grow spiritually together through praying and singing. We never used to find the time to go on walks, but that has been one of our highlights during quarantine."



**Something clicked during quarantine. We do not bicker; we just enjoy each other."**

## Connecting With Kids

**Set your own rules.** Parents have become the teachers, kids miss their friends, and everyone is stressed out, says Jessica Borelli, PhD, associate professor of psychological science at the University of California, Irvine, and a licensed clinical psychologist specializing in parent-child relationships. "Prioritize what matters to your family, not what matters to your child's teacher or your neighbor. Prioritize your connection with your child — listen to what's on their mind. Spend time cuddling and being silly," she says.

**Empathize with older kids.** If your tween or teen is miserable because they can't see their friends, resist the urge to tell them to dismiss their feelings. Instead, let them know that while you can't fix the problem, you get it, says Borelli. "Ask your teen to tell you what it's like for them to be away from their friends. Tell them that you've never had to deal with such a long separation from a friend, and that it sounds unbelievably hard. Tell them that you think they're being incredibly strong and that what they are doing is helping to keep the family safe. Tell them you're grateful for their sacrifice. Validation of painful emotions usually helps ease the pain."

**Cut yourself some slack.** "Parents have a lot of guilt," says Braithwaite. "They know their kids shouldn't be spending so much time on screens and be more diligent about schoolwork, but the conditions have changed and it's really hard. You need to be a little compassionate toward yourself and understand that you won't be able to click on all cylinders."

**Get kids extra support if they need it.** Telehealth has really taken off during the pandemic, and many mental health practitioners have eagerly gotten on board. If your child appears to be seriously depressed or anxious, reach out to an expert. Some one-on-one therapy or a few family sessions could make a big difference, says Gelbart.

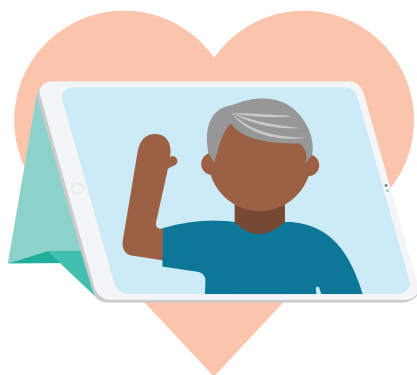


## Keep in Touch With Other Friends and Family

**Find ways to connect remotely.** “Social distance does not equal social isolation,” says Gelbart. Zoom book club meetings and poker games might not be the same, but they can still help foster bonds and lift your spirits.

**Multitask.** If a Skype session with a friend or relative for the sole purpose of catching up feels awkward or too time-consuming, combine it with another activity, suggests Deborah Marin, MD, director of the Center for Stress, Resilience and Personal Growth at Mount Sinai in New York City. She chatted with her son for 45 minutes via FaceTime while he was cooking dinner. “It worked out very well,” she says.

**Plan in-person visits carefully.** Gelbart hadn’t seen his grandchildren for two months, but his children and grandchildren recently stopped by. Everyone kept 15 feet apart in the yard. The children were briefed by their parents ahead of time and understood the importance of keeping their distance. “The 4-year old said, ‘I wish I could give you a hug,’ and I said, ‘Give your mom a hug for me.’ Not being able to see my adult children and grandchildren has been the hardest part of all of this.”



## When Relationships Turn Dangerous

Relationships can benefit your health — when they’re good ones. If your relationship has turned violent or you’re worried it’s headed in that direction, it’s time for professional assistance. Call the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) (800-799-SAFE) to be connected to get free, confidential guidance from an expert.

## Date Night at Home

Connecting with your significant other is important for a healthy relationship — even if you can’t go out. **Ashley Rodriguez**, author of the cookbook “[Date Night In](#),” shares her tips for leveling up your together time.

### Lose the Sweats



Trust me, I know how challenging it can be to think about slipping out of comfy pants and into something “date-worthy,” especially after a long day. But for me, when I look good, I feel good. Putting on my favorite shade of red lipstick puts me in the right mind-set every time.

### Set the Mood With Music

Create a playlist that connects to your relationship. Add songs that mean something, like your wedding song. Take turns, or let the more music-minded of the two of you handle it. My husband curates the music for us, often to coordinate with the food I’m making. If it’s pasta, you better believe he puts together an amazing Italian playlist.



### Try Something New With Your Food

I used to be a pastry cook at Wolfgang Puck’s Spago. For me, nothing says date night more than a meal that feels unique. Sometimes I like to stretch myself in the kitchen with a new recipe; other nights, we order in. The point here is to keep things exciting with the food. Make it celebratory.



### Focus on Fun

The news these days is overwhelming. It’s healthy to give yourselves a reprieve by finding things to enjoy together. Think back to when you first became a couple: What made you laugh? Rewatch your favorite movies, or play a game. Remind one another that even alone at home, away from the bustle of a fancy restaurant, you can still have a great time.





# IT'S K

## TO FEEL WHATEVER YOU'RE FEELING

We've all had a lot of feels lately.  
That's normal... and healthy.

BY KATE ROCKWOOD

### It was a chicken fajita meal kit

that pushed Amy Ortega over the edge. Or rather, the missing spice packet that was supposed to be included with the kit, which Ortega had planned to cook and feed her two kids after a long day working as a nurse in Chicago. "When I realized the spices were missing, I got so angry I threw the empty box across the kitchen," she says. Only when her husband came rushing in did the anger flare-up strike her as both silly and surprising.

It's also the kind of emotional outburst many of us have experienced in the age of COVID-19.

When most of us think of grief, we think of

the pain of losing a loved one. Grief, though, isn't just the sadness caused by a death — it means mourning a loss. And with all the changes brought on by COVID-19, many people have experienced a loss of some sort, whether it's a loved one, a job, social connections, or everyday routines.

"Losing anything that gives us a sense of identity, security, and meaning can cause grief," says Robert Neimeyer, PhD, director of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition and a psychology professor at the University of Memphis.

Right now, the entire world is connected by a mourning of the past. It doesn't mean all the changes have been

negative, just that any major upheaval can be unsettling. You may be feeling anxious, scared, angry, depressed, or even numb to feelings. The important thing is to recognize that any of your feelings are valid, even if you and your family are fortunate to be healthy and financially secure.

"Just because your loss doesn't sound significant, doesn't mean it's not significant to you. Your feelings are important and your loss means something," says Gretchen Kubacki, PsyD, a psychologist and certified bereavement facilitator.

And while there is no one right way to deal with your emotions, here are some ways to help make coping with loss easier.



## Allow Yourself to Grieve

Many people are familiar with the five stages of grief popularized by the book “On Death and Dying” by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, MD.

They are:

- Anger
- Denial
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

These stages can provide a helpful framework. But everyone grieves differently, meaning these stages may not apply, or you might experience them in a different order. What’s most important, according to Kubacky, is to give yourself the time and space to experience your feelings.

“People grieve very differently — some emotionally, some practically. Some share confidences with others, and other people go it alone,” Neimeyer says. “And grief is more than just a series of unwelcome emotions; grieving is also an attempt to reconstruct meaning that has been disrupted by loss.”

Essentially, you’re trying to make sense of your world and how you will function in it going forward. Seeking support from those who care about you, talking to a professional, and processing your emotions through art or writing exercises can all be beneficial.

## Focus on the Present

COVID-19 has made the future fraught. Right now, you might be asking yourself a lot of unsettling questions: Will you or someone you love get sick? Will you keep your job or be able to pay your bills?

When can you get back to some of the activities you enjoy? Fear of the unknown can be debilitating, which is why it’s more useful to “live more fully in the present moment,” Neimeyer says.

“Life deserves your attention in the present and that’s where you’ll find beauty and hope,” he says.

Which doesn’t mean you shouldn’t take action. Just the opposite: Making decisions on what you can control will give you a sense of stability. Keep up with health-protecting practices like handwashing and social distancing, eating well, and getting physical activity. And limit how much news you follow or how much time you spend on social media if it makes you feel bad afterward.

## Find Ways to Cope

To deal with the new normal and the emotional roller coaster COVID-19 has created, you need to find coping strategies. Different methods work for different people, so try multiple ideas to see what’s best for you. Here are a few suggestions:

### **Start a journal.**

Kubacky recommends putting pen to paper as a way to process your emotions, thoughts, and fears. If you’re having trouble sleeping at night, writing a to-do list about the tasks you’re worried about could make it easier for you to fall asleep.

**Meditate.** Meditation is a great stress and anxiety buster. Find a few minutes every day. If you need some guidance, there are countless free apps to download.

**Take a walk.** Physical activity can boost your mood and reduce stress, but walking also comes with a side of sunshine and fresh air. Just be sure to social distance.

**Stay connected.** One of the painful side effects of the pandemic is the loss of social connection at a time when many need it most. Schedule regular video chats with friends and family, or take an online class, or join a virtual book club. “Video coffee dates or happy hours, dinner parties, or good old-fashioned phone chats can be amazing in the feelings of joy, positivity, and optimism that they generate,” Kubacky says. “This is also a wonderful time to revisit the almost-lost art of letter writing.”

If you’re having a hard time coping, try talking to a professional, starting with your primary care doctor. You can also check with your company to see what programs and resources might be available.





## The Kids Are Not Alright

If you have kids, you may have noticed that quarantine has changed them. Maybe they're climbing the walls, giving distance learning the cold shoulder, eating less (or way more), or sleeping poorly.

Just like you, your kids are also feeling the impact of loss. Their schools are closed, they can't see their friends, maybe they're missing their grandparents. It's a good idea to acknowledge their emotions and losses and also try to give them as much routine as possible, Kubacky says.

Much of your own feelings of loss, grief, disappointment, and sorrow may be connected to your kids. Maybe it's the sadness that your high school senior won't get to attend graduation or the disappointment of having to cancel a family vacation. Allow both yourself and your kids to grieve these losses, but also find ways to recognize and celebrate the lost moments, too. For example, a virtual birthday party might replace your kids' usual

backyard bash, or cooking with Grandma might happen over videoconferencing, with everyone in their separate kitchens.

## Find Moments of Happiness

Part of allowing yourself to grieve is to give yourself room to feel negative emotions, Neimeyer says. But it's also important to make room for joy. You've likely already experienced moments of gratitude and happiness like having a less hectic lifestyle or reconnecting online with an old friend.

Keeping a gratitude journal is one concrete way to mark these moments. Practicing gratitude has been shown to help people feel less lonely and stressed.

COVID-19 has disrupted many of the moments and celebrations that bring us joy. It's understandable to grieve those losses. But it's also a good idea to find happiness in the small things: feeling the sun on your face, making a friend laugh, or even snagging a roll of the good toilet paper at the grocery store.

## Working Through Financial Loss

Taking a financial hit can cause grief, too. Here are some ways to deal.

### Recognize What's Out of Your Control

Many of the economic forces of COVID-19 are completely out of your control. By recognizing this, you can avoid "personalizing the pandemic," says Alex Melkumian, PsyD, a licensed marriage and family therapist. That might help you avoid some of the negative emotions that are often associated with financial trouble, such as shame and guilt.

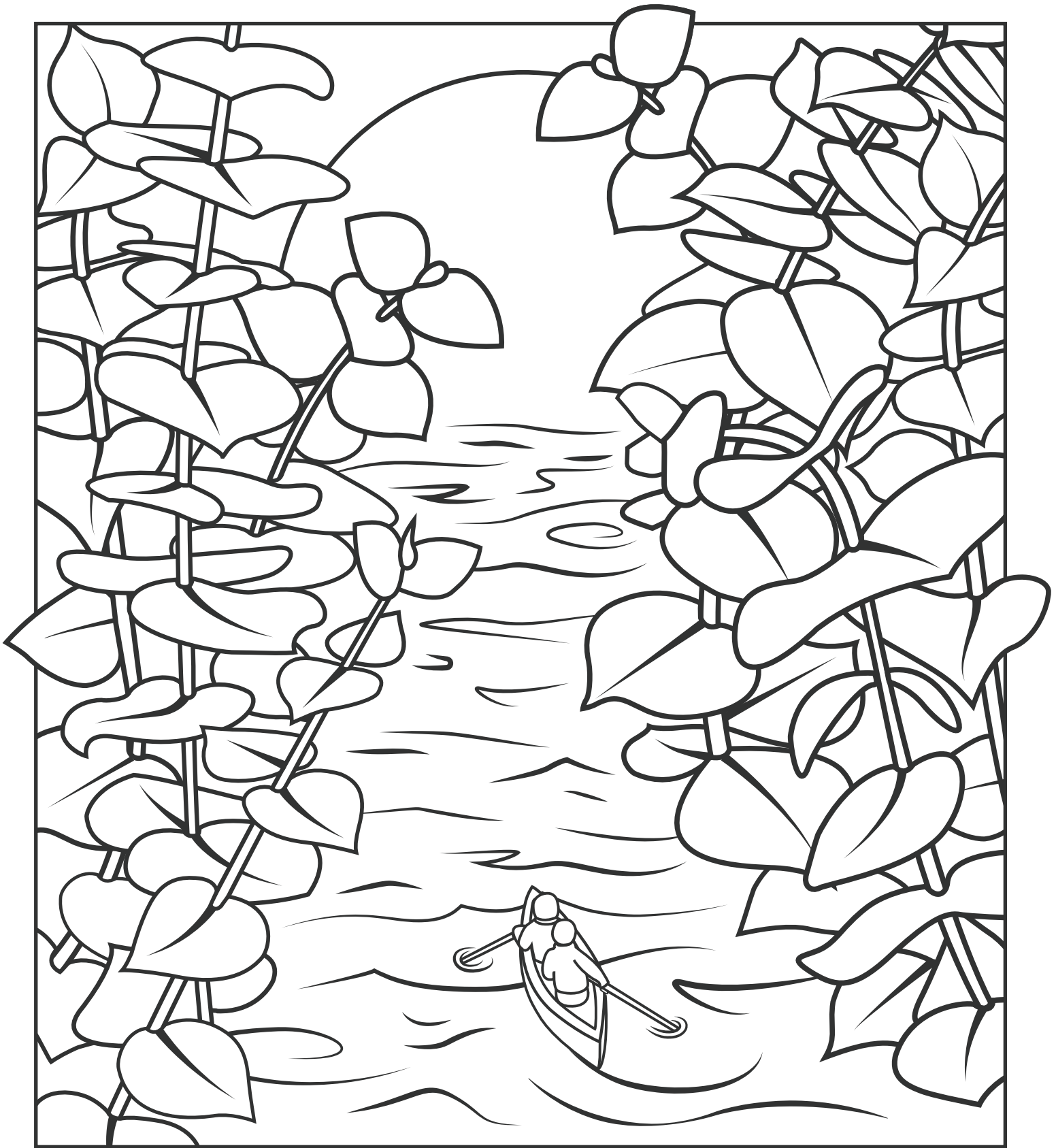
### Consider the Worst Case

If you feel paralyzed by fear, Brad Klontz, PsyD, CFP, a financial psychologist, suggests thinking through the worst-case scenarios. If you lose your job and can't pay your mortgage, you might have to move in with your parents. Letting this hypothetical play out can actually calm your body's "life or death" reaction by demonstrating that even in the worst-case scenario, you will likely still be physically safe.

### Fix What You Can

Being stuck at home more may give you time to start sorting out your finances. That might mean creating a new budget, or starting a rainy day fund. "Making plans can reduce anxiety and help you feel more in control," says Patricia Tidwell, PhD, a licensed clinical social worker. Remember that, eventually, the COVID-19 pandemic will be in the past.





### Color Yourself Calm

Staying healthy is easier when you can find ways to make it fun — like doing something creative, which can be good for your physical and mental health. Channel your inner artist: [Click here to download this page](#), then print, color, and share. Show us your masterpiece using the social media handles below.

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