

## KEEPING HEALTHY IN BODY AND MIND

We are all in trying times. We are surrounded by fears, potential illness, the loss of our usual activities and restricted lifestyles. How can we cope with all of these challenges?

First, we should learn and do all healthy safety precautions in order to prevent getting sick and also protect our loved ones; young and old. These safety strategies are being put out by almost every organization and easy to find. If you need updated information, go to: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>

Besides knowing the health safety tips, what can we do to cope?

You can decide how much to follow the news reports. Please be aware that continual focus on negative fears and even safety precautions will lead to anxiety, depression, and a fearful outlook. These thoughts and feelings can overwhelm us and be the cause of further problems such as insomnia, unhealthy eating habits, and other physical problems.

More news is not good news! Regulate what you focus your mind on. Find what is most positive for you in your life. Focus your mind on that. Is it your love for family members, a friend, or an activity that brings you peace and joy?

Also, find a word, phrase, or expression that brings you inner peace. Repeat that over and over. Reprogram your mind to have safe, healthy, and good thoughts. Such as; 'I will be ok', 'things will be ok', 'we'll be fine'. This is not denial. If you are implementing safety precautions, then your energy can be focused on having a positive mental outlook.

We don't know the future. So instead of attributing a negative outlook, we can choose to believe things will be okay or at least focus on the present day. Who is with you? What are you doing today? And not the unknown scary future thoughts.

These are some mental skills that we can learn to do with ourselves. Positive mental skills take practice, just like learning a new language. Over time, the more we practice and find what helps our mind, the better we will be able to redirect our thoughts as well as have a peaceful mindset.

Do you have any faith, spiritual thoughts, or beliefs? Now is the time to incorporate them and trust them. You may find that your spiritual beliefs are not helping you in this time of crisis. If so, that will naturally lead you to search for deeper meaning and beliefs that resonant in your heart, mind, and soul.

Physical activity is also crucial now. Cardio activity changes the chemistry in our brains and cleans out the inner stressors, it also builds up our immune system. We should have plenty of time to do this now. Go for a walk, a hike, a jog, a ride, or some other physical activity that works for you.

We are being forced to realize what is most important in our lives. We are being brought together with our loved ones. Families are being required to not only come back home, but we are being instructed to stay home together. College students are returning home, and families are being reunited. We are being brought back to what is most important, our health and each other. Parents and kids are gaining valuable time together. People are playing board games again!

We are an over-active busy culture. While it may initially seem restrictive to our lifestyles, it will eventually lead to feelings of peace and rest. Similar to the reasons we take vacations, to get away from our busy daily lives and let our mind be vacated from continual 'to do's'. After vacations, we tend to feel refreshed and recharged. This can be the result of this time. (Of course, sometimes my parents would say, 'after this vacation, I'll need a vacation.') That reminds me, laughter is a good medicine too. Watch some comedy or something that makes you laugh. Watch Family Feud or something joyful. Laughter will lift your spirits and bring peace to your feelings and mind.

Besides that, have fun and be wise with your safety!

**Dr. Greg Allen** is a Licensed Therapist practicing in Palos Verdes Estates. ([drgregallen.com](http://drgregallen.com)). He is also the founder and director of Freedom4U, a non-profit that seeks to guide youth towards their life purpose and thereby reduce risky lifestyles. Freedom4U provides mental health services to 18 schools in the South Bay and LA Harbor areas. ([freedomcommunity.com](http://freedomcommunity.com)).