



COVID-19 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT MONTH

Week 4



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Finding Joy During Difficult Times

Stressed about the global pandemic, unemployment, financial uncertainty, or civil unrest? Even in these tough times, you can find joy in your daily life and improve your outlook.

“Sometimes the smallest things take up the most room in our hearts.”

~Winnie The Pooh

Now more than ever, finding joy in your day-to-day experiences can improve your quality of life and enhance and protect your mental health. As many of us are entangled in intense and heavy information from the news and social media, possible long-term shelter-in-place orders, financial instability, and political and civil unrest, it's become more and more difficult to find peace—both internally and externally. Furthermore, for many adults who are working from home while taking on new roles and responsibilities for their children's academic needs, a newfound stress in the home is ever present. How can we, both individually and as a collective, “spark joy” to lift our own and each other's spirits to get through this global crisis?

Tips for finding joy in your life

Here are some ideas to give you a pick me up:

Listen to your favorite music. It can help you recall positive memories, providing an escape from the day-to-day difficulties you may be facing. Recalling these memories by listening to music is an easy and passive way to boost your mood while you're working, cleaning, or just hanging out at home. Research has shown that listening to your favorite jams can reduce anxiety, [lower blood pressure](#), [improve sleep quality](#), and enhance mood, too. Or listen [here](#) for relaxing music that can boost happiness and positivity.

Develop a daily gratitude practice. It doesn't have to be a big ordeal; just think of one to three simple statements a day such as, "I am grateful I have a roof over my head," "I am grateful for the sun that rises each morning that I feel on my skin," or "I am grateful for the delicious strawberries I had today." At the end of each day, write in a journal or say aloud the things you were grateful for, as simple as they may be. By doing this, even during the most difficult or distressing times, your gratitude practice will help bring your circumstances into perspective, indirectly create joy, and keep you grounded. Here are [30 more simple ways](#) to practice gratitude.

Spend time in a vision practice. Close your eyes and focus on your very favorite place, person, mantra, prayer, or even vacation. Breathe into the moment and envision yourself in this space or situation. Consider the colors, tastes, textures, and conversations. Try to spend a dedicated five minutes soaking in the moment, slowing down your breathing and relaxing your body. Some people find that this practice is enhanced either by laying down with bolsters under the legs and a weighted blanket on top of the body or by sitting in a chair with a cushion behind the back and under the feet. [Meditating regularly](#) in this way can help remind you that aspects of the COVID-19 situation—such as isolation, sadness, and desperation—are temporary. You will once again have more positive experiences, and these short meditations may even help you create new ones. Here are [5 visualization meditation techniques](#).



Find the "awe" moment every day. "Awe" is the concept of experiencing wonder and amazement. Awe frequently conjures up the idea of something "big" like snorkeling the Great Barrier Reef or seeing the Eiffel Tower in Paris. However, researchers are finding that if we take the time to notice small, pleasurable moments every day, we can reap the same benefits. Awe moments can be found in seeing the sun rise, for example, or watching ants march. We can also experience "awe" by reading beautiful poetry or hiking on a new path and seeing interesting rocks or flowers. Take the time to notice things around you that you may have taken for granted. By relishing them and their place in the world (and yours), you can derive more meaning from your life, feel more connected to the world at large, and experience more joy in the day to day. Here are [3 more ways to find awe](#) during uncertain times.

Tips for helping others experience joy



The following ideas can help others experience joy. Since helping others is one of the best ways to feel happier and healthier yourself, when they feel joy, you will, too.

Send letters, poems, or drawings to first responders, essential workers, or elderly people who are sheltered in-place. By engaging in this activity, you are bringing a sense of comfort and joy to others and giving yourself a feeling of fulfillment for having passed on some

happiness to others. Additionally, it can help shift your attention away from your own day-to-day struggles and the heaviness you may be feeling.

Start collecting spare change or a small amount of money every day, with the intention of donating it to a charity of your choice. At the end of a designated period of time (one to three months), write a letter to the charity letting them know what you did, why, and the meaning behind the donation. Saving the money and seeing the fruits of your labor will spark joy that you were able to meet a goal. Additionally, by writing a letter you'll be able to express your intentions of goodwill to another. Oftentimes, when we voice our positivity instead of keeping it inside, we can further feel joy throughout our soul.

Run an errand for a friend or order food for them. Helping others with even something small can be a big stress reducer right now. They will be so thankful. And from their gratitude, you'll experience a sense of joy—as will they.

10 Small Ways to Find Joy While Physical Distancing

Small moments of joy mean more during times of struggle. In this [article](#) written by Victoria Stokes about ways to find joy while physical distancing, she shares some of her experiences and the things she has learned on her journey to finding joy.

Here's how to do it:

1. **Bake something yummy.** One of the first things I did was to cook and [bake](#). I got happily lost in the process and marveled at my creations at the end, feeling a swell of pride at having achieved something.
2. **Catch up on your watch list.** I made a movie bucket list with my partner and we spent our evenings cuddled under a blanket in front of the TV.



3. **Brighten your space.** I bought flowers and placed them on the kitchen table where I would see them and every time I'd walk by they'd make me smile.

4. **Get moving.** I start my mornings with a dance around the kitchen. Those few moments of uncoordinated jiggling set me up for a more positive day ahead.

5. **Get some R&R.** When I made these changes, my time at home started to feel more like an opportunity to recharge rather than

getting grounded by my parents. My spirits were lifted. I started to feel hopeful and optimistic.

6. **Enjoy silence.** How often do you get to sit and do nothing? For most of us the answer is not very often. Put your phone on flight mode, switch off any distractions, and relish the joy of having nothing to do.
7. **Get lost in a good story.** I'm finally working my way through a pile of books that have sat on my bookshelf unloved for some time. A chapter or two before I drift off at night sets me up for a blissful night's sleep.
8. **Run yourself a hot bath.** I like to add lots of bubbles, light some candles, and maybe even sip some wine.
9. **Play dress up.** I've been pulling out items from my wardrobe and putting together outfits that I plan on wearing when my social calendar is back to normal. It gets me out of my sweats and provides some welcome escapism.
10. **Be creative.** These activities work for me, but you may find joy in a routine that's completely different. Watercolor, make or listen to music, the list is endless. The trick is to find that thing you've been wanting to do for forever, but just haven't had the time to devote to it.



Once you find those little things that bring you bliss, you may find yourself feeling like quarantine was just what you needed.

Content provided by: Healthline

9 Tools to Help You Stay Connected During the Coronavirus Pandemic

While nothing can truly replace the in-person hugs, hello's, high-fives and happy moments, here are 9 great apps, devices and online services to help you stay in touch with your loved ones — while staying safely hunkered down at home.

Tools to help you keep in touch

With a variety of free video chat apps and web platforms available, there are plenty of ways to see and talk to your family and friends. Here are a few you may consider trying:

1. **WhatsApp:** Available across devices and around the world, WhatsApp is a great way to message, call or video chat with basically anyone. And with encryption services built into the platform, you can be sure your communication stays private. However, while making voice or video calls, keep in mind that WhatsApp relies on your cell data if you're not connected to Wi-Fi. In addition, you can't call landline numbers with WhatsApp. Download WhatsApp for [iOS](#) or [Android](#), or use it [on your computer](#).
2. **Skype:** After creating an account, Skype allows you to send messages, pictures and videos to other Skype accounts. You can also make phone calls to non-Skype contacts, including landline numbers — however, this functionality comes with a fee. Download Skype for [iOS](#) or [Android](#), or use it [on your computer](#).
3. **Zoom:** Previously used solely as a business conferencing tool, Zoom has emerged as a popular video chat hangout option. Keep in mind, however, that there are privacy concerns with Zoom calls, as well as a 40-minute time limit if you have a free account. Download Zoom for [iOS](#) or [Android](#), or use it [on your computer](#).
4. **Google Hangouts:** Most people have a Gmail account these days, and anyone who does can start and join a Google Hangouts video call. The advantage of Google Hangouts is that there's no time limit to your video chat. The downside, however, is that only 10 participants are allowed in the video chat room. Download Google Hangouts for [iOS](#) or [Android](#), or use it [on your computer](#).

Devices that make loved ones feel closer

Apps and web platforms are a great way to stay in touch, but some in-home devices can make connecting with loved ones even easier — and feel even more personal. Here are some devices you can buy to help your loved ones feel nearby:

5. **Alexa devices:** The Echo Show is Amazon's smart display that allows you to do a lot of things around your home — including having a hands-free video call with other Echo Show owners, or anyone who has the Alexa app on their smartphone. The Echo Show can also cycle through your favorite photos — helping you feel close to your loved ones throughout the day. In addition, all Echo devices can be used for an Alexa Drop In, which is a voice call option that operates similar to walkie-talkies, but between Echo devices in different homes.
6. **Facebook Portal:** As Facebook's very own smart display, Facebook Portal can be used to video chat with your Facebook friends via Facebook Messenger. While concerns of letting Facebook even deeper into our lives surfaced when Facebook Portal was first released, it's now considered one of the easiest smart displays to use for video chatting. And, with the option to wear virtual masks and set goofy backgrounds, Facebook Portal can be fun for the whole family. Since Facebook owns WhatsApp, you can also use your Facebook Portal to make and take WhatsApp video calls.

Online services that help you hang out

Video chatting is great, but sometimes you want to just *do something* with your friends instead of just talking. Maybe you've figured out a good system for playing a board game or some other fun activity through a video call, but here are some online services that can help you feel like it's just another day hanging out with your buds:

7. **Netflix Party:** By synchronizing playback and offering a group chat feature, Netflix Party is a free Google Chrome extension that makes watching movies and TV with your friends easy and fun again. Keep in mind you can only use Netflix Party in Chrome browsers on desktops and laptops. If you have a Chromecast device, you may be able to cast your screen to your TV.
8. **Steam:** With more than 30,000 video games, 90 million active users and social features like friends lists and in-game message and voice chat capabilities, Steam is one of the best online gaming services. With no subscription fee and online multiplayer games ranging from as little as \$5 to more than \$60, it's a great option for friends who want to play a game together — no matter your budget. Steam also offers Remote Play Together, which allows you to share a game you're playing at home with up to four friends remotely. This feature streams video, audio and voice between players, making it even easier to hop on and play with your friends.
9. **Collaborative Spotify playlists:** Connecting with friends can also be as simple as enjoying music together. If that sounds like you, Spotify allows you to create a playlist together. Through a collaborative playlist, you and your friends can add and listen to all of your favorite songs anytime, anywhere. The best part is that contributing and listening to a collaborative playlist doesn't require a Premium account. However, those with free accounts can only add songs via a computer. Download Spotify for [iOS](#) or [Android](#), or use it [on your computer](#).

Positive Traits

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