



## Self-Care Tips for Anyone Feeling Emotionally Drained by 2020

Do you know that feeling when something completely unexpected sets you off? Like a minor inconvenience pops up and suddenly it feels like the worst thing that's ever happened to you? And after venting your left only to realize, it really wasn't about the minor inconvenience at *all*?

That's kind of how all of 2020 felt, to be honest. Each new bad thing—whether it's a tiny personal mishap you'd typically take in stride or an awful news event—seemingly carries with it the weight of all the bad things that preceded it. As a result, we're all kind of getting emotionally pummeled. Over and over and over. And it's exhausting.

If you've been feeling this way too, you're not the only one. Hopefully, we all use good coping strategies to get through, but in the very least, the threat eventually goes away, and our physiological stress response resets back to our baseline. The difference right now is that we haven't gotten to reset, and everything keeps accumulating anyway.

While there are no five easy mental health tips for making things go right when we can't catch a break, there are small things we can do to take care of ourselves in moments it feels like we can't come up for air. Hopefully, some of the advice here can help, even if it's by making you feel less alone.

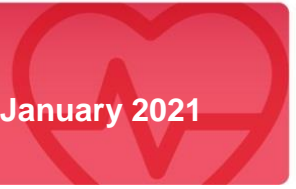
### 1. Focus on getting enough sleep.

If you're going to prioritize one traditional self-care strategy right now, please try to get some sleep. It may seem like a small thing, but it impacts so much. Back in cave-dwelling times, if you were sluggish and tired, you got eaten unless you were on your guard. If you're not getting enough sleep, your body will view everything as a threat to protect you.

Of course, there's a good chance the stress and anxiety of everything are interrupting your sleep right now, so prioritizing sleep isn't exactly easy. But it's worth putting in extra effort to make sure your sleep is as protected as possible, whether that's through adjusting your screen time, doubling down on pre-bed relaxation exercises, or talking to your doctor about other steps you can take. Start with these tips on getting sleep despite pandemic anxiety.

### 2. Don't beat yourself up about how you “should” and “shouldn't” feel.





There's a lot of talk about how we should be adjusted to the "new normal" of living amid a pandemic, and for many that just adds guilt and invalidates how we're feeling. What does "getting used to something" really mean, anyway? It's like permanently having a rock in your shoe. Sure, you might get used to it being there, but that doesn't mean it doesn't still hurt every time you walk. Cut yourself some slack if you find yourself thinking, 'Why do I still feel so bad? Shouldn't I have it under control by now?'

More than that, if you find yourself reacting to things in a way you wouldn't "normally," remind yourself that things *aren't* normal right now! Hypersensitivity is an understandable result of everything going on too. Even a bit of bad news we'd normally handle can feel like a crisis-level threat."

### 3. Interrupt your catastrophic thinking.

Catastrophic thinking is typically defined by therapists as ruminating on worst-case scenarios. Think worrying that your plane will crash or that a small symptom you're dealing with is a sign of a terminal illness. The thing is, though, during these turbulent times, catastrophic thinking hits way closer to home.

Since a lot of common tools to battle catastrophic thoughts might not be as helpful right now (like fact-checking a thought and exploring worst-case scenarios head-on), therapists recommend trying to avoid going down the rabbit hole at all. Look for anything that can interrupt your thinking. When thoughts start to snowball, its time to redirect to a game on your phone or a conversation with a friend.

### 4. Take things one day at a time.

Speaking of catastrophic thinking, it might be in your best interest to focus more on the present than the future right now. Which, easier said than done, I know. But with so much uncertainty about what the future will look like, trying to imagine it is a recipe for spinning out.

Taking things one day at a time doesn't have to be about taking action—maybe today all you focus on is getting through the best you can.

### 5. Remember denial and distraction are okay tools sometimes.

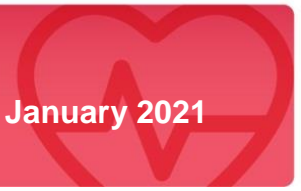
Look, some days you just need to turn off the news and pretend everything is okay. There's often a lot of guilt around distracting yourself from the many horrors of the world, because it can feel like being disengaged is being complicit. But now is the time to use all the coping tools in your toolbox—including things like denial, distraction, a dark sense of humor, or other defense mechanisms you might normally worry your therapist would frown upon.

If you don't ignore what's going on to the point of delusion or ignorance—and you practice self-care in other ways too—you can give yourself permission to turn your brain off sometimes.

### 6. But also give yourself space to process what's going on.

That said, numbing out your feelings completely will backfire too, which is why balance is so important. When you brush something off and say, 'Ah, yes, of course this is happening that's 2020 for you,' those feelings are still getting stored internally. Eventually those feelings will pop back up when your defenses are down – all at once. Also, never underestimate the power of a good cry.





## 7. Really go out of your way to notice good things.

You might know rationally there are still bright spots in the world, but that doesn't make it easy to see them. It can be helpful to make an active effort to balance out everything you're going through with moments of levity. Start a gratitude practice, go out of your way to watch funny shows or movies, swap good memories with old friends—anything to make sure you're not spending all your time focused on how much is going wrong.

## 8. Change your social media habits!

Most days, it can feel near impossible to look away from the train wreck that is Twitter or Facebook. We're in a tough spot these days—social media is a beacon of awful news and discourse, but it's also a necessary mode of connection in a time of social distancing. It's not exactly easy to delete the apps and never look back.

That said, mental health professionals continue to advocate for adjusting your social media habits. If you can't commit to using social media less, then at least use it *differently*. Maybe you can spend more time on TikTok instead of Twitter, since it tends to make you laugh more. Or maybe you want to create a list or second account where you only follow meme accounts. Maybe you can make a habit out of leaving positive comments on posts from artists you follow or on your friends' selfies.

## 9. Carve out one moment a day where things can't go wrong.

I don't know about you, but I've reached a point where it feels like something bad is waiting around every corner, and I'm constantly bracing myself for the next bad news alert or email or text or personal disappointment. Given everything, this feels like a reasonable state of mind to be in—but that doesn't mean we can't create spaces that are protected from these feelings, no matter how small.

For example, it can be as little as five minutes a day. Five minutes where you don't look at your phone, where you won't see catastrophes. Five minutes where you're not going to do anything but lie in bed listening to your favorite music. Or play with your pet or children. Or try a guided meditation. Or whatever that looks like for you.

It might sound small, but in a time when everything keeps piling up, small moments of reprieve can add up too.







## City Star Employee Recognition Program

The City Star Award is the recognition of sworn and non-sworn employees, and non-city groups or employees who have demonstrated safety excellence beyond normal expectations to improve the City's safety culture.

Organizations that commit to sustainable employee recognition programs often find an increase in employee satisfaction, engagement and retention as well as higher productivity rates.

Safety recognition programs have proven to increase overall safety awareness, which results in injury reductions, increased employee morale, and generally safer work environments.

The City STAR program has three levels of recognition

1. Immediate
2. Group-specific
3. Organization-wide recognition of individuals, work groups, and non-city contributors

Supervisors, managers, and peers can recognize an employee or work group who demonstrates safety excellence through safe actions, behaviors, ideas, innovations, leadership, modeling or mentoring.

An employee who is recognized as a City Star will receive a certificate of recognition by section management in front of their peers at a later date.

Management then submits the honoree's name to the Safety Oversight Committee, along with a description of their safety excellence contribution. They are then considered for organizational recognition by the Safety Oversight Committee.

Because safety risks vary among the different city work groups, supervisors, managers and other City staff are encouraged to be creative when designing specific work group recognition programming. However, all group specific recognition programs must comply with City Star policy and guidelines (Personnel Policies Manual 904).

Any manager, supervisor, or other employee of the City of Tulsa can nominate an employee for a City STAR award.

For more information on the City Star program, go to <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/city-employees/human-resources/safety/>.

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