No matter where you’re at in your preparedness efforts, you likely haven’t prepared specifically for a pandemic. For most of us, the disasters that motivate us into action include floods, fires, earthquakes, and other events that arrive suddenly, are relatively short in duration, and don’t affect worldwide populations. While the pandemic presents many challenges you may not have prepared for, it shares one trait with all other disasters: the potential to cause stress. This month, learn what steps can be taken now to protect your mental health throughout this crisis.

**Step 7: COPING WITH STRESS**

The pandemic is causing stress for many and, for some, the fear and anxiety are overwhelming. Stress can severely affect both adults and children, resulting in worrisome conditions and behaviors, including:

- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention suggests the following ways to cope with stress.

**Take breaks from the news.** Whether it’s on the television, internet, radio, or social media, too much pandemic news can be upsetting. Limit the time spent getting news and take breaks when needed.

**Take care of your body.** In stressful times, it’s especially important to take good care of yourself. Eat healthy, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol and drugs, and calm anxiety with deep breathing, stretching, or meditation.

**Stay connected.** While social distancing, stay in touch with family and friends. Reach out by phone, email, letters/cards, texts, video chats, or social media. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

**Help is Available**

**Need help? Know someone who does?** If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others:

- Call 911
- Contact the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990, visit www.samhsa.gov/disaster-preparedness, or text TalkWithUs to 66746
- Contact National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233, TTY 1-800-787-3224, or visit https://www.thehotline.org/

**Additional Resource**

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention is an excellent resource for accurate pandemic information including how to protect yourself from the virus and how to cope with stress. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
Share Your Progress and ENTER TO WIN!

Share your photos for a chance to win great emergency preparedness prizes!

Take a photo of your emergency preparedness progress. Your photo can include:
- Your supplies
- A designated storage area
- Activities, such as shopping or packing an emergency kit

Eligibility: Must be an EPUD customer to participate in prize drawings. By submitting your photo, you consent to EPUD using your photo and first name on our social media channels, email communications, and printed publications.

Congratulations to our TWO WINNERS!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, last month we extended the March photo submittal deadline to April 20. This month, we congratulate two prize winners: Stevi M and second time winner, Jennifer C. Both will receive a WeatherX® Radio and loaded Mayday® Survival Kit. The kit includes food, water, flashlight, radio, tent, utility knife, first aid materials, and much more.

STEVI M

Stevi sent in this photo that resulted from her discovery of a lacking area of preparedness during “Snowmageddon 2019.” When power went out, so did use of the well that supplied her home’s water.

Since then, her family has taken great steps in preparedness.

“We’ve begun to stash water and water supplies in the nooks and crannies of our home,” Stevi said. “We feel much better now!”

JENNIFER C

Jennifer impressed us back in October when she sent in a photo of her water storage. This month, another photo illustrates her preparedness in other areas.

Jennifer has collected propane tanks for cooking, flashlights, batteries, candles, and a long list of other supplies.

She also has an ample supply of firewood that they gathered after last year’s storm.

Thank you for participating in EPUD’s 1 Step Forward program!

View or download past editions of our newsletters at www.epud.org/1-step-forward-monthly/