

# UW Health: Actively coping with stress during COVID-19 Pandemic

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**MADISON, Wis.** - The psychological stress imposed on us by the COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented in our lifetime, and the ongoing uncertainty of what “normal life” might look like once the pandemic ends is only adding to our country’s collective anxiety. Behavioral health experts at UW Health are encouraging everybody to engage in “active coping” strategies to help combat the psychological stressors of these difficult times.

The term active coping refers to a coping style characterized by solving problems, seeking information, seeking social support, seeking professional help, changing environments, planning activities, and reframing the meanings of problems.

“It is critically important that everybody take a proactive approach to safeguarding their mental health during this time,” says Shilagh Mirgain, Ph.D, distinguished health psychologist at UW Health. “One way to accomplish this is to make the conscious choice to not only reduce the impact of negative stressors in our lives, but to foster behaviors that will strengthen our mental health and well-being.”

Some strategies include:

- Set some goals you’d like to accomplish during this time.
- Set a schedule—routine provides normalcy during unpredictable times.
- Foster self-care (good sleep, healthy eating, regular exercise).
- Stay socially connected - relationships strengthen our resiliency.
- Use your strengths in ways that improve our world.

Resources available to news media:

- Shilagh Mirgain is available for Zoom interviews between 10 am-noon and

12:30-5 pm