



# Self Care Tips & Tools

## GENERAL TIPS

If you're feeling overwhelmed or anxious, diaphragmatic breathing keeps stress hormones low by accessing the vagus nerve. This technique can help focus in the here and now and not in the what-ifs of future stress. It can be used throughout the day, but can be especially helpful in the morning when coupled with prayer routine and allow you to start the day feeling balanced, connected and grounded with a whole heart:

- Step one → take a deep breath in
- Step two → hold
- Step three → exhale
- Repeat 10 times

*Created by an IOCC Frontliner Advisory Group comprised of Orthodox clergy, licensed clinicians and counselors.*

## Youth Focused



Create and maintain a daily schedule/routine. EACH DAY this should include: prayer, silence, eating, doing a good deed, sleeping, exercise and time away from all media sources (phone, TV, iPad, etc.).



Doing a good deed each day is as simple as delivering your neighbors newspaper, connecting with someone who is lonely or helping a family member unload the dishwasher. Get creative!



If you are prone to anxiety, limit or cut out caffeine (coffee, tea, energy drinks).



Set healthy boundaries with friends and family.



At the end of the day, thank God for your blessings. Celebrate what you did well that day. Do not focus on what went wrong or mistakes you made that day. Set a small goal for something you hope to accomplish the following day.



If you have done all the things listed above or can't get motivated to do a few of them, seek professional help.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>) Your priest may be able to recommend a therapist. If your parents are working their employer may offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), where you may be able to access mental health benefits. Most EAPs offer 3-10 free confidential sessions with a therapist.

# Self Care Tips & Tools

## First Responder Focused



**Promote Unit Cohesion:** There is a profound bond of trust that exists between first responders. Peer support is beneficial for self and unit care.



**Learn First Aid x 2:** The first responder carries an individual first aid kit (IFAK). This includes basic life-saving tools, like a tourniquet, that in a crisis can help others or self. Equally important is Psychological First Aid (PFA), which is a proven tool to de-escalate traumatic stress in those who have been affected by it.



**Speak Plainly:** In crisis management, communicating in plain, concise language is essential. Let silent empathy fill in the details.



**Cultivate Light:** Pray to develop and deploy tools of insight and vigilance.



**Wear Identification:** The badge we wear identifies us to others; the badge and cross reminds us who we are and why we are here in the first place. The cross and the signing of it re-focuses us on the moment and who is there with us.

## Faith Focused



**God Is With Us.** During moments of isolation when we are physically separated from others or lonely, we may have experienced some level of despair or anxiety. Remember GOD IS WITH US at all times. He is our consolation. He has not left us alone in this crisis. Our Risen Lord is the Victor, the Conqueror and our Savior.



**Prayer and Worship:** Prayer is a conversation with God. It is nourishment for the soul. Our Lord desires for us to live in a deep inner joy which will abide within us and sustain us on our journey through life with all its struggles. In our home, we have the "little Church", gathering at the Icon Corner to offer prayer of Praise, Worship, Petition, and Thankfulness. If we are unable to attend Church and worship corporately, participation through a live streamed service with other Orthodox Faithful is available. Reciting the Jesus Prayer can be a help.



**Faith, Hope and Trust:** Let us on our journey and in moments of crisis enliven our faith with hope in trust in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Focus on what you can control.<sup>2</sup>



**Thankfulness:** When we are in an unexpected crisis, we can continue to nourish ourselves and to hone our skills and talents for the betterment of our communities and always for the Glory of God. Saint Nikolai (Velimirovich) writes: *"The thanks of us will not make God greater, more powerful, more glorious, richer or more alive. But they will make us all of these things. Our gratitude will not add anything to God's peace and commitment but it will add greatly to ours. Thanksgiving to God will in no way change God's state and being but it will change these things in a grateful person. Thanksgiving enables the thankful and nourishes good works. Thanksgiving inspires benevolence in the world and gives freshness to every virtue."*<sup>3</sup>



**Outreach:** Love of God – Love of neighbor. During the crisis, we might not be able to go to our respective Church or to the local community center to prepare packets for those in need, but if we are not sick or self quarantined or self isolated, we should check in on neighbors to see what they might need especially the elderly, the homebound, or the vulnerable. Reach out, be kind, compassionate, and help others.



**Communication:** Maintain a relational connection through emails, texting, phone calls. Virtual meetings or gatherings (in person if allowed). Use of the [IOCC Care Calls tool](#) to check in on others!



**New Daily Plans:** Our daily activities have been affected by a crisis. There is a need to develop a new daily plan which includes personal and family prayer, worship, remote work, eating, exercise, and a time for fun. Ensure a balanced and meaningful day. Remember that in Holy Scripture we read that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ states: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." He is our light even in this moment of crisis. The joy of His Resurrection followed the dark days of His mocking scourging and death on the Cross.

2) In Matthew and Luke we read "Therefore, I tell you do not be anxious about your life; and, which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? But seek first the Kingdom of God." And in Mark we read "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"

3) Velimirovik, Bishop Nikolai. *Orthodox Homilies for Sundays and Feast Days* (Lazarica Press, 1998). Volume 2. Page 300