



# 30 Days of Self-Care with **COVID Coach**

Prioritize Your Well-Being and Mental Health  
with the COVID Coach Mobile App

Created by  
the Mobile Mental Health Apps Team  
at the National Center for PTSD



**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

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## 30 Days of Self-Care with COVID Coach

# About This Self-Care Guide

### **What is this?**

The 30 Days of Self-Care with COVID Coach guidebook will walk you through 30 different suggestions for self-care practices – one for each day of the month! Each practice should be completed using the COVID Coach mobile app.

### **Who is it for?**

This self-care guide is for everyone! The COVID Coach app was created by the Mobile Apps Team at the National Center for PTSD. As with most of our resources, this app includes some content and resources specifically for Veterans, but the majority of the information can be used by anyone. Please feel free to share this guidebook with Veterans, VA staff, family members, friends, and anyone else you think may benefit from making time for daily self-care.

### **Why should I use this guide?**

During times of stress, it is especially important to set time aside for self-care. COVID Coach offers a number of practices and tools to help you practice self-care. Many exercises can be completed in just a few minutes. Even if you aren't feeling particularly stressed, it's important to get into a good self-care routine to prevent stress. All it takes is 30 days to establish a new habit, so visit Day 1 to get started on the path to self-care.

### **How do I use this guide?**

This guide contains a list of 30 self-care practices – one for each day of the month. However, there is no need to wait for the beginning of the month to get started. Feel free to try as many or as few of these exercises as you'd like, on a schedule that works for you. This guide could be used Monday-Friday, or Sunday-Saturday. It is up to you when and how to work the activities into your routine. This isn't about putting pressure on yourself to do the things you "should be" doing – it's about making time to do things to relax and recharge.

You also might consider sharing this guide with your colleagues. This guide includes a one-page summary of all the self-care practices recommended, which can easily be displayed in common spaces. Many of these practices can also be completed as a group, so feel free to integrate these exercises into morning meetings or huddles. It can be helpful to start the work day with a few moments of calm and reflection.

### **What if I don't have access to a mobile device? Is there a way to use this guide without COVID Coach?**

This guide was designed specifically for the mobile app COVID Coach. However, there are many other useful self-care resources available online. For example, the [Veterans Wellness Guide](#) has easy to follow instructions for practicing self-care and it can be printed or shared online.

Questions or comments? Email: [MobileMentalHealth@va.gov](mailto:MobileMentalHealth@va.gov).



## 30 Days of Self-Care with COVID Coach

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## Quick Guide for 30 Days of Self-Care



Download the COVID Coach app and begin your 30 days of self-care today!

To download the app, open your smartphone camera and scan the QR code. Follow the prompts to go to the App Store or Google Play, download the app, and install it. Each day, open the app and follow the steps below for recommended tools that you can try!

Readings  can be found in the Learn section. All tools  can be found in Manage Stress.

 Day 1 Practice <i>Deep Breathing tool</i>	 Day 16 Try a tool in <i>Creating Space for Myself section</i>
Day 2 Track <i>Well-Being in Mood Check</i>	 Day 17 Practice <i>Finding Meaning tool</i>
 Day 3 Read <i>What to Expect in Staying Well</i>	 Day 18 Try <i>Showing Appreciation tool</i>
Day 4 Enable <i>Daily Inspiring Quote with clock icon</i>	 Day 19 Try a tool in <i>Sleep Struggles section</i>
 Day 5 Read <i>Sleep in Staying Balanced</i>	 Day 20 Practice <i>Mindful Walking tool</i>
 Day 6 Read <i>Facing Xenophobia and Racism in Staying Safe</i>	 Day 21 Practice <i>Change Your Perspective tool</i>
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Day 8 Review <i>Crisis Support options in Find Resources</i>	 Day 23 Practice <i>My Feelings tool</i>
 Day 9 Practice <i>Body Scan tool</i>	 Day 24 Try <i>Re-Connecting with My Partner in Relationship Tools</i>
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 Day 11 Try <i>"I" Messages in Relationship Tools</i>	Day 26 Browse available resources in <i>Find Resources</i>
 Day 12 Practice <i>Thought Shifting tool</i>	 Day 27 Try one suggestion in <i>Connect with Others tool</i>
 Day 13 Try an activity from <i>Indoor Activities with Kids tool</i>	 Day 28 Practice <i>Positive Imagery tool</i>
 Day 14 Practice <i>Self-Compassion tool</i>	 Day 29 Practice <i>Grounding tool</i>
 Day 15 Try <i>Soothing Images tool</i>	 Day 30 Read <i>Staying Strong in Staying Well section</i>

Questions or comments?  
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# 30 Days of Self-Care with COVID Coach

## Day 1 Start Simple with Deep Breathing

When you've been upset, you've likely heard the same advice from a parent, teachers, doctors, friends, etc.: "Take a deep breath." This advice might seem like old news, but that's because it works! Slow, deep breathing can trigger the body's system that is responsible for calming us down after a crisis. Take a few minutes to focus on your breath.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Deep Breathing*


1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools** (across the top)
3. Scroll down the list of tools and select **Deep Breathing**
4. Bonus: If you find this tool helpful, you can add it to your Favorites list by tapping the Thumbs Up icon 

## Day 2 Checking in with Yourself

It's hard to know where you're going if you don't know where you are. So, let's start by checking in with yourself! You will be asked to periodically assess your well-being over the course of the next month, so that you can track your progress through this 30-day challenge. You might not find that your scores change very much, and that's ok! Tracking your well-being can give you a lot of helpful information. For example, if you are noticing that you are feeling increasingly worse over the next month, this might be a sign that it's time to seek professional help. Today's assessment is about measuring your baseline – seeing how you're doing right now so that you can compare next time.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Track Well-Being*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Mood Check**
2. Tap **Track Well-Being**
3. To take the assessment, tap **Get Started**
4. Bonus: Set a reminder to take this assessment weekly by tapping on the clock icon.  You can find this icon on the top right corner of the Home Screen.

## Day 3 Managing Expectations

Disappointment often occurs when our expectations don't match reality. You might find that you began the COVID journey by setting a few lofty goals for yourself, like learning a new language or how to play an instrument. However, as the weeks went on, you may have noticed yourself feeling tired and struggling with motivation. That's ok – juggling everyday tasks and the stress of the current environment can be a lot. Setting realistic expectations may help you protect yourself from experiencing unnecessary guilt and disappointment.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Read What to Expect*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Learn**
2. Tap **Staying Well**
3. Tap **What to Expect**
4. Bonus: After completing the reading, tap on one of the suggested tools at the bottom of the screen to try it out



# 30 Days of Self-Care with COVID Coach

## Day 4 Receive Inspiration with a Daily Quote

Reading an inspirational message may help to lift your mood or bring a smile to your face. Sign up for a daily inspiring quote to receive a dose of encouragement to keep going, or a reminder that you are worth it. When you receive the quote notification, take a moment to read it and think about what it means to you.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Daily Inspiring Quote*

1. From the Home Screen, tap the small clock icon ⌚ in the top right
2. Tap the slider to the right of **Daily Inspiring Quote**
3. Tap the time that shows up beneath it – set the time for when you would like to receive the quote each day

## Day 5 Checking in about Sleep

Getting enough sleep every night is important for both physical and mental health, as well as your overall quality of life. Part of staying balanced is getting enough sleep. If you're finding it harder to fall asleep or stay asleep, practicing good sleep habits may help you sleep better and feel more energized during the day.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Read Sleep*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Learn**
2. Tap **Staying Balanced**
3. Tap **Sleep**
4. After reading about **Sleep**, try out some of the tips suggested or tap on **Sleep Tools** for tips and suggestions to improve sleep

## Day 6 Stress Related to Xenophobia and Racism

Experiencing or witnessing xenophobia or racism can be painful. Learn where to report race-based attacks or discriminatory acts, find suggestions for how you can respond, and get tools to cope.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Facing Xenophobia and Racism*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Learn**
2. Tap **Staying Safe**
3. Tap **Facing Xenophobia and Racism**
4. Bonus: Try out one of the suggested strategies for coping with or taking a stand against racism



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## Day 7 Physical Activity

It might be more challenging to keep up with an exercise routine during this time. However, engaging in regular physical activity can boost your mood and reduce stress and anxiety. Even if you're not able to get outdoors or go to the gym, there are other ways you can incorporate some physical activity into your daily routine.



### COVID Coach Tool: Read *Physical Activity*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Learn**
2. Tap **Staying Balanced**
3. Tap **Physical Activity**
4. After reading about Physical Activity, try out some of the tips suggested on how to incorporate physical activity in your daily routine

## Day 8 Get More Support

Have you ever felt completely overwhelmed, distressed, or unsure of what to do? There are a number of resources available via phone, text, and online, to provide free emotional support 24/7. It can be helpful to check out the available resources so that you know what's available if you or someone close to you ever needs extra support. Look over the *Crisis Support* resources in the *Find Resources* section. These are available for you to use whenever you might need them, now or in the future.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Crisis Support*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Find Resources**
2. Tap **Crisis Support**
3. Read through the different resources
4. Bonus: Share a resource with someone close to you to let them know they're available

## Day 9 Rest and Check-in with Your Body

Take time to check-in with your body with the body scan. This audio-guided exercise will lead you through paying attention to each area of your body, one at a time. Taking time to focus on your body can be relaxing, and it can help you release tension that you might not have noticed. The full exercise takes 9 or 16 minutes, depending on which one you pick; however, even 2-3 minutes of practicing a body scan can be helpful. Once you are familiar with how it works, you can practice on your own without the audio.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Body Scan*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Body Scan**
3. Tap which exercise you would like to listen to – Julia's is about 9 minutes long, Robyn's is about 16 minutes – and then tap **Continue**
4. When you're ready, tap **Play**





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## Day 10 Set a Personal Goal

During these stressful times, we may become so overwhelmed with work or caring for our families that we forget to take care of ourselves. Remember, you must take care of yourself first so you can continue to care for others. Setting a personal goal can be helpful to ensure you're making time for yourself. For example, you might set a goal of connecting with a friend this week by phone or video, making yourself a favorite meal, or whatever it is that you enjoy that you can do for yourself.

### COVID Coach Tool: *Personal Goal*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Mood Check**
2. Tap **Set a Goal**
3. Tap **Get Started**
4. Tap the "i" icon ⓘ for tips on creating a SMART goal – tap back (the arrow in the top left) when you're ready to enter your goal. Tap **Next** once you're done.
5. Rate your progress toward your goal today – you can come back and rate this once per day by tapping on the goal.
6. Bonus: To view your progress over time, from the Goals screen, tap the three columns ☰ in the top right. If you have more than one goal, you can swipe left to view each one.
7. Bonus: Set a reminder to rate your progress toward your goal daily, weekly, or monthly. From the Home Screen, tap the small clock icon ⌚ in the top right and tap the slider to the right of **Goal Reminder**. Adjust the frequency and time for when you would like to see the reminder.

## Day 11 Improve Communication in Stressful Times

Communication with others can be difficult at any time, and especially so during times of increased stress. How we communicate can affect our ability to connect with others and to fulfill our own needs. Practice some useful communication skills, including using "I" statements to reduce conflict and better communicate your needs.

### COVID Coach Tool: *"I" Messages*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Relationship Tools**
3. Tap **Using "I" Messages**
4. Depending on your device, either tap on the + icon or **Add an "I" Statement**
5. Follow the prompts to fill in the blanks, then tap **Done**, then **Save**
6. Use your statement in the future and add more statements to practice using this approach in your communication.

## Day 12 Avoid Touching Your Face

We know that touching our faces can increase the risk of infections, but it's something most of us do a lot. Research suggests people touch their face an average of 8 (medical staff) to 26 (students) times per hour. It's unlikely you will stop touching your face altogether, but with practice you can reduce your risk of exposure. The following tool will help you occupy your mind when you feel an urge to touch your face.

### COVID Coach Tool: *Thought Shifting*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Learn**
2. Tap **Staying Healthy**, then **Not Touching Your Face**
3. Read about ways different tools may help decrease face touching
4. Tap **Thought Shifting**:
  - a. Tap **Continue** and a recommended thought will appear
  - b. If this thought is not useful, select the left/right arrows for a new thought

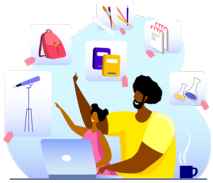




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## Day 13 Finding Things to Do with Your Kids

Having kids at home full-time can be a challenge. Need new ideas for helping your kids learn and have fun, while also staying connected with you? Make paper airplanes, have a dance party, plant an indoor garden – check out this section of the app to get more suggestions.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Indoor Activities with Kids*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Indoor Activities**
3. Tap **Indoor Activities: With Kids**

## Day 14 Build Self-Compassion

Sometimes the hardest person to have compassion for is ourselves. It's easy to focus only on our mistakes, without appreciating the difficult circumstances of the present moment and extending the same compassion as we would to others. Self-compassion is about accepting yourself – warts and all – so that you can pick up, move on, and do better next time. Self-compassion has lots of benefits, including preventing burnout among healthcare workers. Start with this simple exercise to increase compassion towards the self.





### COVID Coach Tool: *Self-Compassion*



1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Self-Compassion**
3. Tap **Self-Compassion**, or any other compassion-building exercise

## Day 15 Self-Soothe with Pictures and Music

Sometimes it might feel like this crisis will go on forever. It can be helpful to think of a time when we felt happy and start to anticipate the good times that lie ahead. Photos and music are a great way to recall happy memories. Take a few moments today to enjoy those memories.

### COVID Coach Tool: *Soothing Images*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Soothing Images**
3. To add photos from your device:
  - i. iOS:
    1. Tap on  on the bottom of the screen
    2. Tap **Add Photos**
  - ii. Android:
    1. Tap on 
    2. Tap on + icon on the bottom right of the screen

- iii. You have the option to either add photos from your device's photo library or take new photos.
  - iv. To remove photos from the app, simply press down on the images you would like to delete, and tap on the trashcan icon 
4. Once you've uploaded your photos, you can scroll through them by swiping left and right. You may enlarge the photos by tapping the square icon  at the bottom of the screen



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## Day 16 Take Time for Yourself

Some of you may be so busy that you have to fight for 5 minutes of alone time. Others may have been at home alone for months now. However, it's important to note that being alone is not the same as taking space for yourself. It's easy to fill our days with activities that distract us, rather than fulfill us, and creating space is about taking a few minutes to have a quiet moment with yourself and reflect. This could be done in silence, or while listening to music or engaged in a pleasant activity. Scroll through the options to find an activity that works for you.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Creating Space for Myself*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Challenges**, then **Creating Space for Myself**
3. Scroll through the tools using the forward arrow icon (iOS) or by tapping the "New Tool" button (Android)
4. Tap **Continue** when you find an exercise you'd like to try

## Day 17 Turning a Crisis into an Opportunity for Growth

Uncertainty in the world can be stressful, but it can also be an opportunity to reflect on what matters most. What does matter most to you? What are your priorities – your family? Your work? Helping others? This tool can help connect you to what's most important to you going forward.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Finding Meaning*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Finding Meaning**
3. Tap the arrows on the bottom to read and reflect on different ways you can find meaning in your life

## Day 18 Practicing Gratitude

In the face of a distressing 24/7 news cycle, it's easy to focus only on what is going wrong. To keep from getting overwhelmed, it is important to pursue balance by trying to notice the positive as well. Take a moment to think about what you are grateful for, or what you appreciate about your family, friends, partner, children, roommate, etc. Make sure to let them know what you appreciate about them!



### COVID Coach Tool: *Notice the Positive, Showing Appreciation*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Learn**
2. Tap **Staying Together**
3. Select **Notice the Positive**
4. After completing the reading, tap **Manage** at the bottom of the screen
5. Tap **Showing Appreciation**
6. Tap **Get Started** (iOS) or the + (Android)




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## Day 19 Wind Down before Bed

Under normal circumstances, it can be challenging to wind down at the end of the day. Stress and anxiety only make getting a good night of sleep more difficult. Tonight, try one of the COVID Coach sleep tools to wind down before bed.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Sleep Struggles*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Challenges**, then **Sleep Struggles**
3. Scroll through the tools using the forward arrow icon (iOS) or the “New Tool” button (Android) and practice whichever one seems interesting.
4. Bonus: If you find a tool that you like, press the “thumbs up”  to add it to your Favorite wheel (found on the Home Screen) for quick access

## Day 20 Fitting Mindfulness into a Busy Routine

Some days it can be especially difficult to find 5 minutes for yourself. However, there are many ways to incorporate self-care into your day! Walking mindfully is one way to get grounded and clear your mind, even if you have a packed schedule. Learn how and practice when walking from your car to work, while running errands, or even just down the block.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Mindful Walking*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Mindfulness**
3. Tap **Mindful Walking**

## Day 21 Try Another Perspective

When we feel hopeless about the future, it can be difficult to stay motivated to do what we need to do to take care of ourselves and move forward with our goals. In these moments, sometimes it's important to challenge our perspectives. This does not mean telling yourself that “everything is going to be ok.” Instead, try to challenge your negative thoughts with more realistic thoughts, such as, “I’ve been through hard times before and made it through.”



### COVID Coach Tool: *Change your Perspective*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Change Your Perspective**
3. An alternative thought will appear – if this thought is not useful, tap the right/left arrows at the bottom to scroll through more options




# 30 Days of Self-Care with COVID Coach

## Day 22 Find Some Stability in Trying Times

Some things are within our control and some are not. Small daily rituals help create stability in the face of uncertainty. Create a new ritual or make an enjoyable activity routine.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Daily Rituals*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Daily Rituals**
3. A recommendation appears – if this is not useful, tap the right/left arrows at the bottom for more options
4. For some options, a chat icon  will appear on the bottom middle of the screen for you to message a friend or loved one

## Day 23 Acknowledge Your Emotions to Yourself so They Don't Get Stuck

Emotions are important for a full life, but sometimes our emotions can feel overwhelming. In the face of difficult emotions, some people have the tendency to shut down. Suppressing or ignoring your emotions is likely to lead to your emotions managing you, instead of the other way around. Practice labelling your feelings in the moment so they can help you make decisions and be present.



### COVID Coach Tool: *My Feelings*



1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **My Feelings**
3. Read the prompt and tap on Add a Feeling (iOS) or + (Android) at the bottom
4. Follow the prompts to complete the exercise
5. Each entry will be added under **My Feelings** so you can see changes over time.

## Day 24 Relationship Check-Up

There may have been many changes to your life as a result of the pandemic. Whatever the circumstances, stressful life events can negatively impact personal relationships. To maintain stability in your relationship, it can be helpful to set aside some time to focus on your partner, even if it's just for a few minutes per day.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Re-Connect with My Partner*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Relationship Tools**
3. Tap **Re-Connect with My Partner**
  - a. Scroll through using the left/right arrows on the bottom of the screen
  - b. For some options, a chat  or calendar icon  will appear on the bottom middle of the screen for you to message your partner or schedule time in your day to do the given task



# 30 Days of Self-Care with COVID Coach

## Day 25 Help Your Children Adjust

Many aspects of life are affected by the pandemic. You may have to help children adjust in addition to adjusting yourself. Review some tips for how to help support your children in these uncertain times, and beyond.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Help Toddlers/Young Children/Teens*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Learn**
2. Tap **Staying Together**
3. Tap the appropriate option(s): **Help Toddlers and Preschoolers, Help Young Children, Help Teenagers**
4. Bonus: Read **Talk about School Closures**
  - a. From the Home Screen, tap **Find Resources**
  - b. Tap **For Parents and Caregivers**
  - c. Tap **Talking About School Closures** (\*Note: This is an external link – in order to load the webpage, data or Wi-Fi are required)

## Day 26 Financial Assistance and Other Aid

Financial stress can be overwhelming and a threat to your well-being. In addition to learning different ways to handle stress, help may be out there for anyone who is struggling to pay bills or buy groceries. Find links to resources and instructions on how to apply for unemployment aid, financial relief programs, food banks, and other assistance. If you do not need these resources, you might consider ways you could volunteer, donate, or otherwise contribute to those less fortunate. Helping others is a wonderful way to find meaning and value during a crisis.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Find Resources*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Find Resources**
2. Scroll through the different resources
3. Tap **Bonus**: Share a resource with someone close to you to let them know they're available

## Day 27 Stay Connected

We are all in this together, but social distancing can make our loved ones feel very far away. When much-anticipated social gatherings and family vacations get cancelled, it's important for our well-being that we find fun, new ways to safely connect with others. Explore some ideas in the **Stay Connected** tool.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Connect with Others*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Connect with Others**
3. Scroll through suggestions using the forward arrow icon



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## Day 28 “Walk” on the Beach

You may not be able to take a vacation anytime soon, but it’s important to take small moments to relax and unwind. This exercise will encourage you to take a long luxurious walk in a beautiful location – from the comfort of your own home (or car! or office!). Choose between the beach, a forest, or a beautiful country road.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Positive Imagery*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Positive Imagery**
3. Select your preferred scene
4. Tap **Continue**

## Day 29 Ground Yourself in the Present Moment

With all that’s going on, it’s easy to get caught up in thoughts about the future. However, in order to avoid getting overwhelmed, it can be helpful to take a few moments to focus on the present moment. One way to maintain present focus is to turn your attention to your senses. For example, you might consider sitting in front of your home or place of work, closing your eyes, and focusing on the sounds around you. Or perhaps you’d prefer to keep your eyes open and mindfully take in the sights of your neighborhood. Check out the *Grounding* tool to browse different ways to connect with the present moment.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Grounding*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Manage Stress**
2. Tap **Tools**, then **Grounding**
3. Scroll through suggestions using the forward arrow icon

## Day 30 Staying Well as You Move Forward

The current crisis will eventually shift and pass. How can you best move forward? Have you found tools or resources that might be helpful in the future? Choose the ones that worked best for you and practice them regularly. Remember your core values, your top priorities, and what you are grateful for. Be kind to yourself and others. Read *Staying Strong* to learn more strategies for maintaining any positive changes in the long-term.



### COVID Coach Tool: *Staying Strong*

1. From the Home Screen, tap **Learn**
2. Tap **Staying Well**, then **Staying Strong**
3. Bonus: Tap **Seeing My Strengths** and remind yourself of all your good qualities and experiences.