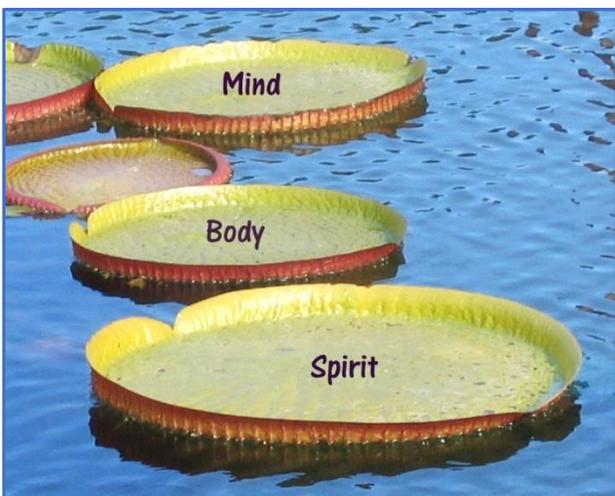


## Guest Article

### **Coping with Stress During the Pandemic** by Connie Nesbary, MA LPC LLP\*

Feeling stressed out, stuck, overwhelmed? You are NOT alone! Stress is something that everyone deals with at varying degrees throughout life. However, with all that is going on in the world at this time with the pandemic and the economic, cultural, and political upheavals, stressors are amplified for all of us. Here are some self-coping skills that may be used as reminders or help you manage stress and build resilience for the long-term.

Habits of resilient people\*\* include switching unhealthy behaviors for healthier ones (walking vs web-browsing), taking action to redirect emotional energy, facing fears through gradual exposure to train your brain to stay calm, and practicing viewing issues from other perspectives. Listening to others and engaging in conversations to continue learning helps to relieve anxiety and to know that you are not the only person dealing with issues. Talking to friends also helps you to focus your energy and actions on what you have control over and to let go of anger that can lead to physical symptoms. Resilience is also seen in those who do not see life's problems as permanent or personal. Look for activities in life and relationships that create joy, laughter, and positive emotions. Habits of self-awareness that exhibit empathy, gratitude and compassion build resilience. Protecting your wellbeing by setting boundaries and limits to prioritize what has the best impact for you is important. This means making decisions about how you spend your time and whom you spend your time with and being able to say "no" without having to explain yourself or feeling guilty. Practicing being nonjudgmental means cutting yourself and others some slack. Share how you feel without having to blame another person. We are all doing the best we can with what we have. Tomorrow is a fresh start. Learning these habits takes practice and time. Welcome each day as a new day to practice again.



How are you doing in each of these areas -- Mind, body and spirit? Are you doing a daily self-check to maintain balance in these areas? Think of each area on a scale of 1 to 10. How would you rate your health at this time? If you're not feeling well physically, contact your doctor (call 211 if you need resources). If you're feeling mentally exhausted or stressed, there are several things you can try from walking in nature to taking a nap to shutting off the news for a while to calling your local community mental health agency for more support. There are

also hotline numbers for those with more specific issues such as the National Sexual Assault

Hotline (RAINN) for abuse survivors at 800-656-4673 and the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255. It is a sign of resilience to ask for help when you need it. If you are experiencing concerning symptoms, such as panic attacks, self-harm or suicidal thoughts, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255.

\*Connie Nesbary, MA LPC LLP has been a Licensed Professional Counselor and Limited Licensed Psychologist in Michigan for over 25 years with specialties in PTSD and trauma recovery and specialized training as a Star Behavioral Health Provider to work with veterans.

\*\* adapted from research by Brian E. King, Ph.D., Bowling Green State University

*Michigan NOW does not endorse any specific course of treatment or any particular therapist. We encourage you to make your own decisions regarding your care, and to consult with medical and mental health professionals if you feel like you need help. Please remember that self-care is essential.*