

# Finding a New Normal

Let's face it — the world has changed a lot since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Things seem to happen so quickly that what may be normal one day is totally different the next. This kind of uncertainty can make you worry because you don't know what the future will bring.

One thing we do know is that this virus will not last forever. Experts are already working on ways to keep the world safe. And while we don't yet know how long or in what form this will take, we do know that progress will be made.

Even if it doesn't feel like it, we're already learning how to make a "new normal." This means we'll need to make changes to how we live our lives.

## What You've Gone Through

If you're a "non-essential worker," you may have been able to keep working safely from home. While some people found this helpful, others found that it brought new challenges. If you have children home from school, you may find yourself juggling work and parenting. Maybe you don't have a home office or all the tools you're used to. These and other issues may make you feel like you're being less productive.

Or maybe you've been furloughed because your job had to close for a while. In addition to worrying about the health and safety of your family, you've had to think about how you'll pay bills and put food on the table.

Either case can put much more stress on you and your family. Spending so much time at home together can be good or bad. For some families, it has made relationships stronger. For others, it has caused strain or conflict.

Finally, there's the people we aren't seeing. We miss the friends and family we can't visit. We feel sad about social events that aren't happening. We even have to miss important celebrations like weddings, birthdays, graduations, and life memorials.

## Getting Back

As COVID-19 runs its course, stores will slowly reopen and more people will get back to work. Some things will go back to the way they were. Some things won't. Since few

of us have ever lived through an event like this pandemic, we'll have to learn as we go until a vaccine is found. Here are some things we can all do to make this time easier:

**Be kind to yourself and others.** We're all new to this. Everyone will feel differently about what's safe for them and their families. Try to be patient and forgiving as we work together to find new ways of doing things.

**Keep your chin up.** Work, shopping, and social events are changing in many ways. You may feel frustrated at times. Try to remember that it's not possible to go back to "business as usual." Even though you may have liked your usual routine, use this time to find new and better ways to get things done.

**Follow the rules.** Some places may still ask you to wear a mask and gloves. Others may limit how many people can be inside at once. Be mindful of people's personal space. As more and more people go out, it will be important to follow any rules put in place to prevent the spread of the virus again. The rules for what's allowed may be different from state to state and even town to town. That's why it will be important to share information about what's happening so that we can do what's best at work and at home.

**Stay in touch.** Our work lives may include fewer in-person meetings and less travel. In our personal lives, we may not see large gatherings for a while. We may

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also have to cut back on vacations. This can make you feel lonely. That's why it's important to find new ways of staying in touch with friends, family, and co-workers. Whether through technology or good old phone calls, be sure to stay connected.

**Limit how much news you're getting.** In a world connected by smartphones, the internet, and 24-hour news, it can be tempting to get news about the pandemic all the time. While this may have been helpful at the start

of the crisis, it can also increase your stress. Instead of watching the news all the time, consider doing a "news roundup" once or twice a day. Then you can find more relaxing and positive ways to spend the rest of your time.

The end of COVID-19 will not be a "flip the switch" moment. We will all continue to be pushed outside of our comfort zones as we find new ways to connect with our co-workers and loved ones. If you need help adjusting, call your EAP. We're here to help!

## Need Help?

Call toll-free, 24 hours a day, seven days a week: **1-800-722-EASE**

TTY users call 711.

Or visit us at: **[mhn.advantageengagement.com](https://mhn.advantageengagement.com)** and register with company code: **EASE**

We offer counseling sessions face-to-face, over web video, or over the phone.