



## National Sheriffs' Association Psychological Services Board

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### **Wellness & Resilience Tips & Tools:**

- 1. Practice gratitude:** find one thing you are grateful for in the morning and one thing at night and write it down in a journal or put it in a jar. This way, you have a record of good stuff for every day and when you are having a more difficult day you can remind yourself of what is good in your life and the world. When you focus on what you have and what you are thankful for vs. what you lack, your energy and mindset will change. This will also help you to bookend your day with goodness and help you to remember that there is always more good happening with you and in the world, than bad.
  - 2. Breathe Deep:** Though it may sound too simple to be effective, taking at least 10 minutes a day to breathe deep (slowly inhaling for a count of 5 and slowly exhaling for a county of 5) can change your life. Practicing this breathing technique lowers your cortisol, reduces stress, enables you to think clearer, lowers your blood pressure and heart rate and gives your body a break from constantly being “on.”
  - 3. Try Meditation:** Meditation can be an intimidating activity, since most of us can't seem to slow our brains down and we often get frustrated when we try. YouTube has tons of free guided meditation, there are free apps (i.e., <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/> <https://www.headspace.com/covid-19> and <https://asanarebel.com/>) or you can just try sitting in a quiet place, and counting your breaths (see above) for 10 or 20 minutes. Remember, when you first start out it will be more difficult to stop thoughts from coming up, but as you are focused on your breath, just let them go, knowing you can get back to thinking afterwards. The benefits of meditation include: lower stress, reduced anxiety and depression, improved mental and emotional health, enhances self-awareness and attention span, improves memory, improves sleep, controls pain, and lowers heart rate and blood pressure.
  - 4. Intentionally choose your mindset and outlook:** Most of us wait to see what is going on in the world before we choose our thoughts and moods. I challenge you to instead, get up and decide that today will be good, focus on your blessings and remind yourself that you can get through anything. Don't wait for something good in order for you to be in a good mood and don't let something “bad” ruin your day. To support your mindset staying positive, watch positive videos (I use YouTube every day), listen to good music and throughout the day hunt the good. If you come across a challenge, look for the gift or lesson in it, and remember you have gotten through other challenges and come out better.
  - 5. Tell a better story:** Whether you realize it or not, all day long you are telling stories to yourself, about yourself and the world/people around you. What most of us don't realize is that many of our stories are negative, and thus, we end up experiencing negative emotions and stay stuck in an unproductive mindset. Below are some examples of positive stories you can tell about yourself and the world/people around you. You don't have to believe the story you tell yet, just start telling it, throughout your day and watch your mindset, emotions and decisions improve.
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### Positive personal stories:

Everything is happening for me  
I can get through anything  
I always figure it out  
I am blessed  
I won't let my history interfere with my destiny

### Positive world/other people stories:

There is a gift and lesson here  
God's got my back  
This too shall pass  
They are doing the best they can  
Everything happens for a reason

**6. Practice Forgiveness:** Many of us hold onto the pain of the past, instead of finding a way to work through it and let it go. Every time we “drop an anchor” from an event or situation that happened to us, deny we need to work through things, hold a grudge or keep reliving the event, we keep ourselves stuck in the pain of the past. Though we don't always control what happens in our lives, it is our responsibility to learn from it and keep the negative events from tainting our future. So, ask yourself what pain from the past is holding you back from fully living in the “now.” What do you need to do to work through it (i.e., talk about it with someone you trust, write about it, pray, feel the emotions)? Then commit to do those things and move on. Your future is waiting and you and your family deserve your best.

**7. Engage effective coping strategies:** Many of us, during times of stress engage in unproductive coping (i.e., overeating, overdrinking, binging on Netflix, lashing out in anger, totally shutting down, etc.), which keep us stuck in a negative mindset and emotions. I encourage you today to start finding better coping strategies you can utilize. See below for the two different types of coping and examples under each. The goal should be working through emotions when you can't change things, but when you can, getting into action.

### Emotion Focused (when you can't change it and have to work through your emotions about it)

- Exercise
- Hot bath/shower
- Venting/talking with someone you trust
- Massage
- Meditation
- Forgiveness
- Reading a book

### Problem Focused (you can change, intervene, or influence the event/situation)

- Time management and to do's
- Anything focused on working on yourself (mindset, perspective, more self-awareness)
- Asking for help/support
- Setting boundaries, giving feedback, providing discipline/consequences
- Utilizing a new/different approach

**8. Leverage Your Relationships:** This is really a challenge during this time of social distancing, but make sure you don't end up isolated and alone. There are many free services to help you connect virtually (i.e., Zoom, facetime, Skype, WhatsApp, etc.) with friends and family. It is not only important to connect and enjoy each other, but also to discuss the emotions you are experiencing, ways you are coping and talk about how you will all get through this. Remember too you can also have a socially distanced neighborhood get together where you talk to each other from your driveways or across the street, a drive by birthday party (where people come by

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your house and send well wishes and congratulations from their car), or a walk and talk where you visit your neighbors from their decks on your daily walk around the neighborhood. Be creative and nurture your relationships. We need each other more, now that ever!

**9. Intentional Self-Care Activities:** As passionate, service professionals you often put yourself last. However, this leads to burnout, exhaustion, a negative mindset and emotions, and an inability to make good decisions. Furthermore, when you are in burnout you become more susceptible to depression and social isolation. Below are some examples of self-care you can do each day and I challenge you, to do at least 20 minutes of an intentional self-care activity each day. You and those you love deserve a better you!

### Self-Care Examples

- Spend time in silence each day (i.e., on a walk outside, sitting on your porch, in your car, etc.)
- Intentionally listen to uplifting music, videos or podcasts to start/end your day
- Clean/organize your life (this helps us feel lighter and happier)
- Go to bed 30 minutes early (lack of sleep is related to burnout, stress and depression)
- Let go and forgive
- Get a massage
- Practice mindfulness and meditation
- Read a book
- Spend time in nature (without electronics)

**10. Spend Your Energy Well:** There are only three ways we use energy throughout the day (physical, mental and emotional), and the two most exhausting are the thoughts we think and the feelings we experience. Though we don't often feel in control of our thoughts/feelings, we can choose those, like we choose anything else. It is also important to realize that thoughts always come first, so if you want to get to better emotions, you have to start by having better thoughts.

### You can get to better thoughts by:

- Practicing gratitude (#1)
  - Working on an improved mindset (#4)
  - Telling a better story (#5)
  - Practice forgiveness and letting stuff go (#6)
  - Hunting the good throughout the day
  - Spending time with positive people
  - Laughing
  - Believing in yourself and your ability to get through anything
  - Intentionally using positive words that evoke strength & success
  - Practice bigger picture thinking to get a different perspective
  - Practice kindness
  - Helping someone
  - Focus on finding the solution, instead of focusing on and often "resisting what is" (the problem)
  - Realize failure is the best teacher
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**11. Foster your GRIT:** Angela Duckworth defines grit as a combination of passion/purpose and perseverance. Are you living from your passion each day? What is your compelling reason to get up and serve others? Are you living from a higher calling? Once you are focused on something you truly care about and that is bigger than yourself, ask yourself how often you are distracted from it, give up on it or get overtaken by failure or negativity. Many of us are doing work we love and also have dreams for the future, but when faced by negativity, crisis or failure we give up and forget why we started in this work or had the initial dream. Remember failure is always the best teacher and many things in life don't go as we planned, but that does not mean you can't adjust and make the best of where you are now. When you are faced with challenging times, remind yourself about what you have been through in the past, how you overcame it, the gifts/lessons you learned from it, and tap into those resilient reminders now.

**12. Limit your use of electronics:** We are all addicted to electronics, being connected and "informed," and we don't often realize how much this harms us. 24/7 news, social media, texting, email, and on-demand TV/movies keep our minds too busy and reduce our energy and interpersonal connections with those we love. Especially during this COVID-19 crisis, limit your time on electronics, pick one or two news sources and only connect with them twice a day. I know it is a hard transition, but scrolling on FB (or other social media), watching the news all day and zoning out on other electronics, has never made anyone happy or helped them lead a more empowered life.

**13. Live in the NOW:** We don't realize it, but most of us spend our "now's" (present), either living in the past or living in the future. For example, in our current crisis, most people are wishing for what life "used to be like" and are either dreading the future (if it gets worse) or longing for the future (i.e., wanting life to return to "normal"). The problem with doing this is will lose the ability to harness the power of now. We lose the chance for empowerment, happiness, joy, peace, and any sense of freedom. Many people believe they will be happy when....they will feel peace when..... or they will finally have freedom when.....All of these things that we long for only ever happen "now." Of course, you need to plan, learn lessons from the past, etc.; however, in every day, in every moment find your power by focusing on what you control, being grateful for what you have right now, finding a gift in this challenge and work on your mindset. You have more power than you realize, start using your "now's" differently and watch your life change for the better.

**14. Proactive Practice:** Noah built the Ark before the rain and before the flood. The best time to improve your resilience and wellness is to commit to doing something to support that each day. Likewise, if you want to have a positive mindset during a crisis or be resilient in times of struggle, you have to practice these skills before you need them. None of us can pull from habits we have not created. So, where ever you are in life with your own level of resilience and your mindset, find something from this resource list to practice. You may not feel you need help now, but challenges often sneak up on us when we least expect it. If you can create positive habits now, when the next flood comes, you will float well!

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