

Being closer to our loved ones has never been more stressful. How can we maintain healthy relationships during COVID-19?

Telling Our Tale

How to keep lines of communication open



Social distancing is reminding us of the importance of communication. Whether it's with our boss who is no longer in the office next door, or our spouse who is now constantly at home with us, here are some tips to help communicate in high stress times.

How to Discuss Your Stress

- **Don't wait:** Tell your loved one of your stress before it hits max levels. This will help maintain a calm environment and a more productive conversation.
- **Tell with a purpose:** Put thought into why you are telling someone about your stress so you can also communicate how they can help.
- **Choose with thought:** Choose who you are talking to with thought. Different relationships will need different approaches as to how communication is handled.
- **Help them help you:** Give them realistic suggestions of how they can help support you. Then, allow them to give that support when it is called upon.
- **Be selective:** Remember, you don't have to share everything; in some cases it may be better that you don't. It's okay to choose who, what, where and when you share.
- **Listen:** Although it's important to share your information, communication is a two-way process. It's important to hear what the other person has to say. Their response will let you know if you set the correct boundaries for communication.

As hard as it can be to tell others of our stress, it can be equally difficult for loved ones to tell us. Knowing how to effectively help others with stress will be important over the months to come.

Hearing Others

How to help loved ones through stress

- **Recognize Stress Symptoms:** Knowing how your loved ones show signs of stress will be important in knowing their emotional state and learning how to best communicate with them.
- **Show Compassion:** When a loved one becomes withdrawn or aloof due to stress, it's easy for us to react in the same way because we are hurt. This only worsens the situation. Instead, focus on showing compassion to the loved one, yourself and the relationship.
- **Open Lines of Communication:** If your loved one begins to withdraw, re-open the lines of communication. Ask them, "You seem like you're having a hard time. How can I help you?" Focus on support, not blame or judgement.
- **Boundaries:** You will not be able to help someone else with their stress if you are not successfully managing your own. Make sure you're practicing self care and approaching other's stress on your healthy terms.
- **Different, But Still Stress:** We all handle and react to stress differently. Knowing how to best motivate loved ones is important. Some may need praise and appreciation, while others need comfort and caring
- **Life Goes On:** Remember, stress is part of life and in any relationship. When healthy communication and stress management tools are practiced in a relationship, the better handling stress becomes.



For More Help in Stress Management

- [psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com)
- [headspace.com](https://www.headspace.com)
- [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)
- [heart.org](https://www.heart.org)
- [talkspace.com](https://www.talkspace.com)
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- A local counselor
- Your CHP health coach

