

GO!

GET ACTIVE

Keeping fit in a time of social distancing

By Debbie Juniewicz
Contributing Writer

Endless news reports of the coronavirus pandemic paired with a constant stream of closings – schools, restaurants, bars, stores and, now, gyms – can be more than a bit overwhelming.

Whether you are home alone – practicing responsible social distancing – or struggling with a house full of children and new home-schooling responsibilities, stress seems inevitable. But you are not alone.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) site includes a section about managing stress and anxiety. According to the CDC, people who may respond most strongly to this stress include older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19; children; teens; and people who are helping with the response to COVID-19, such as health care providers.

Among the CDC suggestions is taking care of your body including exercise and healthy eating. But with gyms and community recreation centers closed, what can you do to get in a much-needed workout?

Online classes and apps are an option and some like local facilities, like Day Yoga Studio, are now offering online classes. For information, visit dayyogastudio.com.

There are plenty of fitness options to try without having to leave your home and others that add a bit of fresh air and, possibly, sunshine to your social distancing strategy.

"What I say to people is they can do everything at home that they can do at a



Taking a walk in the woods is one way to practice social distancing. CONTRIBUTED/JAN UNDERWOOD

gym, it's simply a change in environment," fitness professional Rich Munn said. "They can use body weight to do push-ups and crunches. They might have a set of bands or sport cords at home that they could use to do all of the movements that they would do in the gym.

"People can think about the movements that they do at the gym and, with a little creativity, simulate those exact moves at home using what is available to them."

Sergio Hairston, a personal trainer at Absolute Fitness, agrees that home fitness is a workable solution.

"The biggest thing is movement," Hairston said. "One of the biggest factors with weight gain is lifestyle

change, not moving enough – you need to be active."

Hairston suggests using books or even a gallon of milk as weights. Running up and down your stairs can also be part of a good cardio workout.

"You want to focus on increasing the repetitions and the intensity, whether it's sit-ups or squats," he said. "Cardio is important, but so is weight training – they really complement each other."

Need to get outside? Although it's a constantly changing situation, most local parks and trails are open. And with more than 340 paved miles of trails, there are plenty of pathways to explore on foot or on bike.

"Taking a walk in the

woods is a perfect place for social distancing," said Andy Niekamp of the Dayton Hikers. "While a lot of indoor facilities are closed, the trails remain open and that's a good thing. It's an opportunity to get some fresh air and sunshine."

Niekamp suggests sturdy footwear that you don't mind getting muddy and to "dress for the weather." Layers are always a good idea as you might work up a sweat on the trail.

A nature hike might be the best medicine of all.

"It's important to focus on our mental health, not just our physical health," Niekamp said. "We need to try harder to seek out activities that will help us reduce stress."

Things you can do to support yourself – CDC recommendations:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.

- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.

- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.

- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

- Call your health care provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

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Hiking can be a great way to reduce stress and anxiety.

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Hitting the hiking trail the perfect stress antidote these days

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If increased stress and decreased entertainment options are taking a toll, take a hike.

Hiking can be good for the body and mind, and the fresh air and fresh perspective you'll encounter on the trail can be great for relieving stress.

"Hiking is an important activity to help you stay strong and physically healthy," said Andy Niekamp, Dayton Hikers group organizer. "Hiking is also a great way to reduce the additional stress and anxiety in our lives. Time outside in nature might be just what we need right now."

Hiking and outdoor recreation are not currently on the list of restricted activities in Ohio and most state, county, and city parks and trails remain open.

While hiking lends itself well to social distancing, Niekamp has recommended the following precautions to the Dayton Hikers and others who choose to take to the trails together.

- Encourage your fellow

hikers to maintain a safe distance from each other. The CDC recommends 6 feet.

- Skip photos where people are standing shoulder to shoulder including group photos. Get creative with your hiking photos and social distancing.

- Don't share food, a water bottle or trekking poles with other hikers.

- Don't carpool. The Ohio Department of Health recommended avoiding public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares.

- Consider not hiking if you are a member of a high-risk group.

- Don't show up for a hike if you are sick or think you might be getting sick.

- Hike leaders should consider placing a limit on the number of people on your hike.

Not sure where to start? Five Rivers MetroParks has trails for first-timers and hard-core hikers alike. For information, visit www.metro-parks.org/things-to-do/hiking/.

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