

COVID-19 IN NOLA: THE NOMC'S TIPS FOR ADJUSTING TO THE NEW NORMAL

There is nothing more basic than the need to feel secure; to feel that I am all right, that things are okay, and will be okay. We feel secure when our environment feels safe, predictable, and manageable. We expect that our life experience gives us the skills to cope with what comes our way. This is the opposite of how we feel in a crisis situation.



Janet E. Johnson, M.D., MPH

We can envision the basics of our security as a chair with the four legs of people, places, routine and rituals. We depend on each of these legs to help us navigate life and face its' challenges. If one leg is damaged or lost, the chair cannot hold up with the same strength and we feel less secure and more anxious. In a crisis like what we are currently experiencing, COVID-19 has taken the legs out from under us. It's no wonder we are feeling overwhelmed and disoriented.

It takes time to adjust. It is normal and okay to feel anxious/stressed/angry/sad/overwhelmed/unsure and a myriad of other emotions.

Also, remember that there will be a day when the pandemic is over. We will dance in the streets. Hug. Eat meals together. Mourn those we lost to COVID-19. **We will regain our footing.**

RECOMMENDED CRISIS RESOURCES

LOCAL NEW ORLEANS

METROPOLITAN HUMAN SERVICES DISTRICT (24/7)

CALL 504.826.2675

VIA LINK (24/7)

CALL 2-1-1 OR 504.269.COPE (2673) | CHAT AT [VIALINK.ORG/CHAT](https://vialink.org/chat)

NATIONAL RESOURCES

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE (24/7)

CALL 1.800.273.8255 | CHAT AT [SUICIDEPREVENTIONLIFELINE.ORG/CHAT](https://suicidpreventionlifeline.org/chat)

CRISIS TEXT LINE (24/7)

TEXT NAMI TO 741741

TREVOR PROJECT (FOR LGBTQ YOUTH, 24/7)

CALL 1.866.488.7386

TRANS LIFELINE (FOR TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY)

CALL 9 AM-3AM CST | 1.877.565.8860

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

1.800.799.SAFE (7233)



Focus on making our **NEW** normal a place you want to live. This will take time.

PEOPLE



Social distancing is difficult and feels abnormal, especially in such a social city as New Orleans. It is hard to be away from our family, friends, co-workers and others in our community.

Stay in touch! Call and text your loved ones. Use FaceTime or Skype. Go on your porch and talk to your neighbors at a safe distance. Build a team and be a good teammate. Craft a strategy for social connectedness with a small group of family and friends, while maintaining physical distancing. Identify the vulnerable and make sure they are included and protected.

RITUALS/ TRADITIONS



Rituals and traditions hold individuals and groups together in times of stress and uncertainty as well as times of celebration and comfort.

Our festivals and parades this spring have been cancelled or postponed, resulting in disappointment as well as economic hardships. We are unable to grieve in our normal ways for people we have lost, or, likewise, to celebrate births, marriages, reunions. This is disorienting and painful. It is normal to feel upset, angry, sad, anxious about the disruption to this leg of the chair. Remember that we are New Orleans, and we came back from Katrina. We are nothing if not resilient.

People are finding new, innovative and different ways to celebrate and grieve under these extraordinary circumstances. These are often unique to the individual. There will be a time we can join together again to celebrate and provide comfort to one another.

ROUTINE



Having a routine decreases anxiety and stress. Our routines have all been disrupted with the stay-at-home order and it is normal to feel anxious and stressed during this time.

Although you likely will not be able to resume your prior routine right now, you can make a new routine for yourself. Several important things:

- Keep a set time for sleep and waking
- Get dressed every day, even if you are not leaving the house
- Set a goal every day, even a small one such as doing a load of laundry or calling a friend
- Eat at regular times
- Schedule in 30 minutes of exercise; walk in your neighborhood, stretch, or practice online yoga
- If you previously kept a calendar continue to do so, writing in things such as your exercise time

Only you can set realistic goals for yourself right now. If you can't fix it... let it go. Do what you can to improve the world around you.

PLACES



We take comfort in familiar places; the sounds, sights, and smells. We know our way around, how things work, and who we will see there. Most of our places are currently shuttered and we have been told to stay home, which can feel confining.

It is important to remember that we are doing this for the vulnerable among us, such as the elderly and ill, and to help our healthcare workers from being overwhelmed. Our places are still there waiting for us. Many institutions and entertainers, national and local, are offering free shows on the internet to take us to our places virtually.

Janet E. Johnson, M.D., MPH

Dr. Johnson, MD, MPH has been one of the NOMC's vital mental health advisors and providers since Hurricane Katrina when she founded a non-profit organization, "Project Rising Sun" to provide therapeutic drumming circles and mental health screenings for our musicians' community. As a psychiatric consultant for Mercy Corps, Dr. Johnson has worked in China and Haiti bringing mental health services to those amidst times of crisis.



**BE KIND AND STAY SAFE.
YOUR LIFE MATTERS.**

NOMAF.ORG/COVID19