



A mindful approach to mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues unabated, people are increasingly struggling with anxiety, depression and substance abuse. Perhaps never has it been more important to be aware of your mental health and the mental health services available to you, and to take steps to improve your well-being. Here's how.^{17,18,19,20}

1. Acknowledge your feelings. Rather than pretend that everything is normal — it's not — honestly assess your reaction to the pandemic. Are your muscles tense? Do you have trouble sleeping? Do you feel overwhelmed or helpless? Are you turning to alcohol and drugs? Do you constantly check your newsfeeds and your symptoms? Keeping a journal can help you gain perspective.^{22,23,24}

2. Watch your use of alcohol. Drinking can dull your senses, but it doesn't make problems go away. You may have a problem if you need more and more alcohol to get the same feeling, if you experience withdrawal symptoms when you stop or if friends or family members are raising concerns.

3. Learn about depression and anxiety. Depression and anxiety are medical conditions that affect hundreds of millions of people and don't just go away on their own. Common symptoms include agitation, irregular sleep, irritability and difficulty concentrating. Seek help if you're regularly feeling anxious or of low mood.^{25,26,27,28}

4. Practice mindfulness. Yoga, meditation and other mindfulness activities can help you reframe your thoughts. Even a single, one-hour mindfulness session focused on breathing and awareness of your thoughts can yield positive results. Try adding this routine to your daily schedule: Breathe 3 times a day at a rate of 6 cycles per minute (5 seconds in, 5 seconds out) for 5 minutes.²⁹

5. Seek help if you need it. If you're regularly feeling anxious or experiencing low mood, reach out for help. Aetna members have access to vHealth services* and the Wysa well-being app, which offers 150+ evidence-based exercises to self-manage stress, fatigue and burnout. The Employee Assistance Program also provides you access to in-person or telephonic therapeutic counselling and mindfulness programs. You can find details by logging into the [Health Hub and visit the Well-being Mind section](#). And if you are thinking about harming yourself, call your local emergency response number immediately.

*For those eligible for vHealth

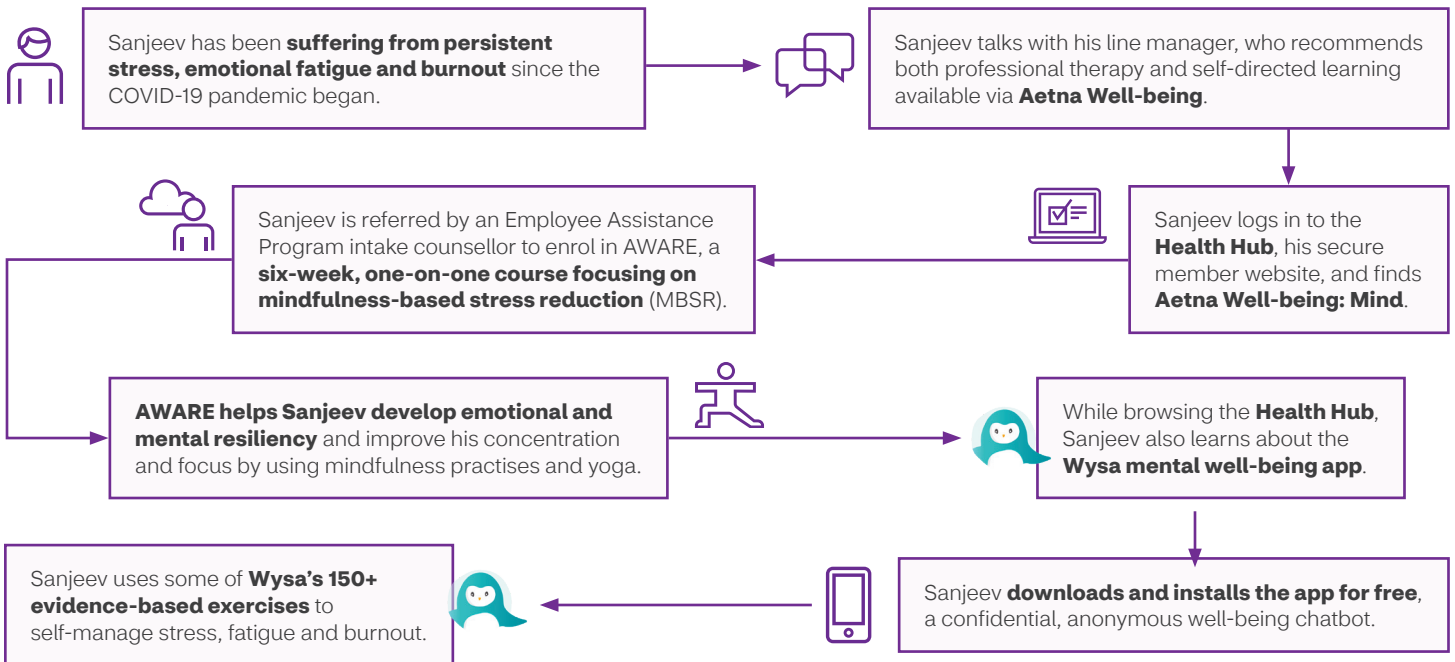
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How Aetna Well-being can help.

Getting help with mental-health concerns doesn't have to require a trip to a counsellor's office or a long wait for an appointment. Here's how Sanjeev, a 39-year-old Aetna International member living in Singapore, got the support he needed online.**



Do you need help?

As an Aetna International member, you can call us using the number on the back of your member ID card. Login to the [Health Hub](#), your secure member website, to find out more about vHealth*, to contact the Aetna CARE team to ask health care questions or to search our directory of in-network hospitals or clinics. Download the [vHealth by Aetna](#) app. In Dubai? Download the [vHealth \(Dubai\) app](#), contact the tollfree number on 8000 35704672 or email support@vhealth.co.ae. In Thailand? Download the [vHealth \(Thailand\) app](#). A member in the U.S.? [Get free access to Teladoc](#). To download Wysa for free, access therapeutic counselling through the Employee Assistance Program, or take advantage of member offer discounts, login to the Health Hub and visit the Aetna Well-being: Mind section. For more information about your health care and well-being benefits, contact your plan sponsor.

You're not alone. Getting help today makes for a better tomorrow.

Mental health resources: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/en/about-us/explore/workplace-mental-health-support-resource.html>

Health Hub: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/members/login.do>

*For those eligible for vHealth | All vHealth apps (vHealth by Aetna, vHealth (Dubai) and vHealth (Thailand) can be downloaded from the App Store and Google Play.

17 <https://www.yalemedicine.org/stories/mental-health-covid-19/>
18 https://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/communitypartnerships/cvtc/Understanding%20%26%20Coping%20with%20Reactions%20in%20a%20Pandemic_386176_284_28977_v1.pdf
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21 <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm>
22 <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>

23 <https://www.who.int/news/item/05-10-2020-covid-19-disrupting-mental-health-services-in-most-countries-who-survey>
24 <https://www.aetnainternational.com/aiweb/contentMgt/assets/documents/wellness/Alcohol-Control-20.03.324.1.pdf>
25 <https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/depression-vs-sadness#symptoms>
26 <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/254610/WHO-MSD-MER-2017.2-eng.pdf>
27 <https://www.aetna.com/health-guide/infographic-depression-anxiety-guide.html>
28 <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression>
29 https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/04/180423135048.htm?utm_medium=sw&utm_source=link&utm_campaign=breathing-exercises-for-more-endurance-improved-mood-more-confidence