

Finding Peace During Chaos



TWO YEARS AGO, AMERICANS WERE dealing with a polarizing election and social unrest, and the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The rapid and volatile events caused massive changes to daily living. The aftermath of grief, chaos, and stress left many people physically exhausted, mentally depleted, and emotionally overwhelmed. The fear and panic caused severe racial and political tensions that damaged familial and social relationships. Sadly, I witnessed many people lose their most important and loving relationships because of intense emotions and opinions tied to these events.

The division drastically reduced the much-needed emotional support and the human connection necessary to manage stress. These unmet needs resulted in some unhealthy ways of coping during isolation. A 2021 survey conducted by the American Psychological Association with 3,013 participants revealed:

58% of participants experienced relationship strain/breakups	23% of participants said their drinking increased	42% of participants' weight increased by an average of 27 lbs.
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We welcomed 2022 with the hope of some normalcy. Still, the world experienced another wave of tumultuous events—Ukraine war, cyber and nuclear threats, skyrocketing gas and grocery prices, supply chain shortages, human rights issues, and new virus concerns. Living through historic threats like these often has a lasting, traumatic impact on generations, leading to unprecedented stress levels. Emotions tied to uncertain and unsettling times can make simple tasks feel draining when re-adjusting to social interaction, education, work, and travel. Long-term stresses constantly test boundaries and patience, so finding peace is essential to mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and relational health.

Here are some guidelines to bring peace to the soul:

MENTALLY- It's so easy to lose yourself and wrap your life around work and family. Find healthy distractions to unwind and relax with activities such as reading or listening to a book, doing something creative, decluttering your home, learning a new skill, or rediscovering your passions. Try to focus on things that encourage you and bring you joy.

EMOTIONALLY- Talk to a therapist or call an emotionally healthy friend to process your feelings and fears, but also focus on what's going well for you. Try writing down two things you are thankful for every day. Practice positive self-talk and be kind and patient with yourself. Explore who you are, not what you have or do, but whom God created you to be.

PHYSICALLY- Add self-care to your weekly calendar like any other meeting. Increased anxiety and depression can manifest as muscle tension, irritation, headaches, fatigue, digestive issues, insomnia, and restlessness. Incorporate short walks or yoga stretches into your daily routine. Develop a good sleep routine and avoid social media and the evening news.

SPIRITUALLY- Inviting God into your daily schedule with prayer can frame your entire day. God cares about the smallest detail of your life, and He hears and answers in unique ways. Try joining a bible study, playing worship music, dancing around your home, or subscribing to a daily devotional.

RELATIONALLY- Set aside quality time with your loved ones and talk about the good times together. Plan and cook meals together—avoid making tasks so complex that it feels like a job. Set boundaries; try to start and stop the workday at reasonable times. 🙏