During this COVID-19 pandemic, all Americans have had to make major changes in the way we interact, work, and go about our lives. The stress and isolation of quarantine and social distancing has left many of us looking for ways to cope.

At Headstrong we have been teaching skills of emotional regulation and self-care to veterans and their families for years, and we thought we would share some of our best practices with you and your families as we all navigate these uncharted waters.

Anxiety is fueled in part by a sense of loss of control. Combat that with creating predictability, a schedule, and plans to look forward to. Create a calendar of meals to make, calls to make, walks to take. Remain in contact with friends through FaceTime, Zoom, and other virtual platforms.

Help your spouse, partner and children with emotional regulation. Stay connected, make meals together, focus on your loved ones and make sure they feel seen. It’s OK to play some board games, listen to or make music. With partners, create safety through wanted touch, and give people space and privacy when they need it.

Care for yourself by exercising, getting plenty of sleep, and eating well. Limit negative inputs of news and frightening stories. Go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time. Plan meals ahead of time. Maintain social contacts. Talk about feeling uncomfortable or anxious. If you can name it, you can tame it.

Self-care also means being in touch with yourself, and not numbing out. Avoid alcohol and drugs at this time. Be kind to each other- interpersonal violence is on the rise during the forced cohabitation of quarantine. Have a safety plan if there is the threat of domestic violence.

Practice mindfulness. Have you been meaning to use Headspace or try online yoga? Now is the time. Notice yourself and your emotions and allow yourself your reactions. Practice self-compassion. Exercise, yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, singing, diaphragmatic breathing are all great ideas, as is getting outside in nature while still practicing social distancing.

Please visit our website at www.getheadstrong.org/covid19 for helpful YouTube videos that teach you some of the skills mentioned above.

We care about our veterans, their families, and you and your families. We are in this together and we will come out the other side soon.

Wishing you health and peace,

Your Headstrong family