

# 805

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## Behind the Scenes

*Here's how our featured experts modified their plans to stay healthy and fit in 2021.*

*"I became more disciplined in my workouts and took advantage of Ventura's beaches and parks."*

—**Lee D. Mendiola**  
("Self-Care to Ride Out the Pandemic," page 68)  
psychiatrist  
Lee D. Mendiola MD & Associates/  
TMS Center of Ventura  
leemendiolamd.com



*"Exercising and staying healthy at home."*

—**Linda Shelton**  
("Self-Care to Ride Out the Pandemic," page 68)  
founder and chief visionary officer  
Rescape Wellness, LLC  
Thousand Oaks  
rescapewellness.com



*"I've spent a lot more time exercising outdoors, mostly exploring our amazing local trails."*

—**Talia Emery, MD**  
("Self-Care to Ride Out the Pandemic," page 68)  
medical director  
Remedy Skin + Body  
Westlake Village  
remedyskinandbody.com



*"During the quarantine I started to enjoy running, and I now focus on eating more fruits and vegetables, plus leaner proteins."*

—**Jesús Medina**  
(Taste/Food, page 76)  
chef  
Coin & Candor  
Four Seasons Hotel  
Westlake Village  
coinandcandor.com



MEDINA: COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS WESTLAKE VILLAGE

# Self-Care *to* Ride Out *the* Pandemic

Local pros share tips for easing the side effects of COVID-19-avoidance.

BY LINDA KOSSOFF

Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Socially distance. Everyone knows the rules for limiting the spread of the pervasive and highly infectious COVID-19 virus. However, *virus-free* does not necessarily equate with *healthy*, especially when many go-to methods for maintaining physical and mental health are currently not safe options. Virus avoidance is taking its own toll as confinement, missed gym workouts, endless handwashing, and the psychological effects of this frustrating and frightening time present new and unexpected challenges even for those lucky enough to dodge contraction of the virus. To help, several local health experts offer their advice on how to weather the pandemic storm and come out of it with your wellness intact.









## Stress on Kids

Children can be just as affected by the disruptions of the pandemic as adults are, if not more so, says Lee D. Mendiola, MD, psychiatrist and founder of **Lee D. Mendiola MD and Associates** ([leemendiolamd.com](http://leemendiolamd.com)) in Ventura. “How a child will be affected depends on their age and level of maturity,” he says. “Younger children who haven’t learned how to verbalize their feelings, tend to act out more when they are anxious. They will probably need more attention from parents because they are looking for reassurance. Teens find it hard to communicate their needs—most of the time they don’t even know what they are—so they tend to isolate and hibernate more.” Given the age group’s prevailing need to socialize with groups and friends, the limitations of the pandemic are especially frustrating to them, leading to resentment and the need to rebel, says Mendiola. “Children’s feelings trickle up to parents,” he says, “who may now have to work from home and be pseudo teachers on top of it. So parents and children feed off each other, and it isn’t a pretty picture.”

## Mendiola’s Advice

**Create structure** “Establish a routine for yourself and your children. Doing this helps to normalize the situation and create a sense of control and predictability.”

**Give them a role** “Empower your children by telling them why they must keep washing their hands frequently. Explain to them about wearing masks. For younger children, reframe it: Say it’s a superhero mask, something they can relate to.”

**Monitor news exposure** “Significantly limit exposure to the news, which tends to sensationalize things, but don’t incubate them either. When the news is on, pay attention to how children are responding to the reports, and if need be, clarify for them.”

## Local Relief

“A great safe activity for families is a trip to one of the **Ventura beaches** ([www.cityofventura.ca.gov](http://www.cityofventura.ca.gov)),” Mendiola says. “The wind at the ocean helps to dissipate the virus. Access to beaches is why I chose to live here.”





## Gym Withdrawal

People who looked to their local gym for cardio and strength training, dance or yoga classes, and even alone time, are finding themselves at sea, says Linda Shelton, a certified trainer and founder of **Rescape Wellness** ([rescapewellness.com](http://rescapewellness.com)), which focuses on active aging. "The effects of inactivity are physical, social, emotional, and psychological," she explains. "Physically, there's loss of strength, mobility, stamina, balance, and energy levels. Socially, for some there's a loss of camaraderie, especially if you took classes. And these physical and social effects funnel into the emotional and psychological." Activity is needed to support optimal brain function, she adds, and support from a class or personal trainer keeps exercisers motivated.

### Shelton's Advice

**Identify your needs** "The first step is asking yourself what you need in order to work out regularly. Equipment? Support? Inspiration? Regimentation? A social aspect? Then work on making those things happen."

**Make adjustments** "If you're used to machines and don't have home equipment, work with dumbbells and elastic bands. If space and privacy are in short supply because you're at home now, perhaps ask for support from friends or family or look at outdoor exercise options."

**Use the Internet** "The online fitness world is exploding with options. **Zumba** ([zumba.com](http://zumba.com)) offers a variety of virtual classes each week. **Silver & Fit** ([silverandfit.com](http://silverandfit.com)) offers free online workouts for seniors 65 and older. And some gyms have created member portals and brought their teachers online."

### Local Relief

**"Gold's Gym** ([goldsgym/simivalleyca](http://goldsgym/simivalleyca)) in Simi Valley now has an 'outdoor playground' that provides equipment and group classes," Shelton says.

## Overwhelmed and Over It

The pandemic, coupled with the relentless 24-hour news cycle discussing it, is producing a continual state of tension for millions of people, resulting in sleep disorders, difficulty concentrating, numerous physical ailments, and reliance on unhealthy habits. "It's normal to worry and be concerned," says Lee D. Mendiola, MD, "but when worry escalates to anxiety, it can become chronic." In that case, he explains, people may turn to one of two destructive coping mechanisms: catastrophic thinking, wherein your mind habitually goes to worst-case scenarios, and denial, in which the danger is minimized. "We see this with people who say the virus is 'not that bad, and I'm not going to wear a mask because it's going to suffocate me,'" he adds.

### Mendiola's Advice

**Be self-aware** "The pandemic itself is stressful. Let's say it is made worse by a job loss or relationship strain. You now have a shorter frustration tolerance. Try to control what you can. For instance, sit down or take a walk with your partner and figure out a budget and an action plan. Realize that you're on the same team and see what you can do together."

**Embrace technology** "If anything has been an immense resource during this fight, it has been technology. Use it to stay connected with others and to engage in virtual activities that you enjoy, such as yoga or crafts."

**Seek professional help** "When we talk about clinical depression or anxiety, we often [use the term] *disorder*, which means, when it starts to interfere with day-to-day living. When you can't manage your work, your relationships or your self-care, it is time to seek professional help to guide you through."

### Local Relief

The 805 area teems with scenic paths and trails. "I like walking trails, such as the **Arroyo Verde Park Loop** ([cityofventura.ca.gov](http://cityofventura.ca.gov))," says Mendiola, "which is beautiful and only a couple of miles long."







## Drinking Beyond Limits

Since the pandemic began, people who would not normally depend on a stiff drink (or several) to get through the day are finding themselves filling their glass more often than usual. "It has been a stressful year, and if you need a drink to unwind from the day, that's OK," says Lee D. Mendiola, MD. "For the general public, it is about moderation. But for the person who has a substance abuse problem, it is black and white. One drink is too much for them."

### Mendiola's Advice

**Ask yourself why** "It's a good idea when you reach for a drink to first ask yourself why you want it. If you're drinking because you've had a long day at work and you want to unwind, or it's simply that you love the taste and the relaxed feeling you get, that's OK. But if it's because you need it to ease your anxiety, to escape or to 'numb out,' then you need to explore the underlying reasons for that."

**Know your predispositions** "For some people, three drinks is manageable and for others, one drink is too much to manage. Even if you don't have an addiction, if you're predisposed to anxiety or clinical depression, know that drinking alcohol will exacerbate those conditions."

**Seek alternative mechanisms** "Depending on why you're drinking, look at alternative ways to attain the relief you need. Exercise burns off the excess energy that can cause anxiety, for instance. Meditation can produce profound relaxation."

### Local Relief

Manijeh Moteghy, cofounder and program director of the nonprofit mindfulness school **Perfectly Here** ([perfectlyhere.org](https://perfectlyhere.org)) in Reseda, teaches meditation courses that are certified by the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center and are available on Zoom on a donation basis. Westlake Village's **Tushita Kadampa Buddhist Center** ([meditateinwestlake.org](https://meditateinwestlake.org)) offers livestream lunchtime meditation classes for \$7 per class.



## Confined Relationships

Spending an extended weekend at home with your partner or roommate can be glorious but when that turns into 10 months with no clear end in sight, an important relationship can quickly go south. “The pandemic has created an artificial environment for everyone,” says Lee D. Mendiola, MD. “Suddenly you’re together in the home all of the time, maybe along with your kids. If you work from home, now your boss is in the room, your coworkers are in the room. Everyone is encroaching on your alone time, as well as your physical and even virtual space. It all produces a pressure cooker effect that can be pretty stressful on relationships.”

### Mendiola’s Advice

**Remember it is temporary** “Did you know that humans are the only mammalian species that can be in a confined space together—say, on an airplane—for hours and not end up fighting each other? This is because, unlike other species, we can project

into the future. Just like we know that our plane is going to reach a destination, we know that the pandemic will end. We must reassure ourselves with that.”

**See others in perspective** “I tell my clients, if you put yourself in an artificial situation, you will see a very artificial response. You might see the worst in someone during this time, but keep in mind that it is not necessarily a reflection of the person, it’s a reflection of the situation.”

**Manage expectations** “Managing your expectations of others is the key to happiness. If you and your partner switched roles, and each of you did what the other person has to do every day, you would end up being more mindful of each other going forward.”

### Local Relief

To carve out time alone, invest in some headphones and transport your mind elsewhere by taking in a virtual music performance, like the Sunday online concerts by **Santa Barbara’s Camerata Pacifica** ([cameratapacifica.org/concerts-at-home](http://cameratapacifica.org/concerts-at-home)).

