1. **Maintain social closeness.** It's unfortunate that we settled so quickly on the term "social distancing," which is the exact opposite of what's best for our mental health right now. What we need is social closeness, solidarity, and support. So yes, be sure to keep your physical distance, but take time every day to eliminate social distance by using technology to get closer to someone.

2. **Take small steps to build a healthy mind.** Science has taught us a lot about wellbeing. A healthy mind helps us handle adversity, enhance our work performance, and live longer, more fulfilling lives. A healthy mind is created by simple things we can do every day. In fact, positive psychology research tells us that we can actually reprogram our brain through simple daily exercises such as: being more attentive to the natural world; writing down three things you are grateful for each morning to train your brain to search for the positive; meditating daily to practice awareness of what is present; reading at least ten pages of a good book every day; exercising for 15 minutes daily; and performing a random act of kindness. Many other types of activities could be part of this list. *You don't have to do all of these at once, and the actions don't have to be big.* For example, your random act of kindness can be a simple text message to encourage a co-worker. Your meditation could be focusing on deep breathing for two minutes or practicing on the guitar. And your exercise could be a brisk walk. Even starting with just one of these exercises, if you repeat it until it becomes a habit, within a matter of weeks you will build a healthier mind. If you can build a number of these exercises into a daily routine, so much the better.

3. **Be of service to others.** Being of service to others is one of the best mental health medicines. We all have an opportunity now to pause and reflect—alone and together—about how much we value our lives and each other, and about how much we depend on our communities to sustain us and help us thrive. Help someone who may feel alone. Offer to run an errand for someone who is at higher risk of getting sick. Take this time to call a longtime friend, chat outside with your neighbors, or send a care package.

4. Be conscious of your use of potentially harmful substances. Colorado has the highest rate of binge drinking in the United States. Across the country, alcohol sales increased by 55% in March. Drugs and alcohol have been a part of our landscape throughout history. From childhood onward, we thrive if we can reap the life-enhancing benefits of potent substances while reducing their potential for great harm. We must be on guard and ready to turn to social support, because these times of high stress and isolation leave us more vulnerable than ever to the potential harm of drugs and alcohol.

5. Get involved in mental health advocacy. Mental health should be everyone's priority. From before birth and well into old age, mental health is key if we are to thrive. With many of us experiencing more down time, now is the time to get involved with mental health advocacy and to be a voice for healthier minds across the lifespan. There are two things you can do right now. First, join Mental Health Colorado's statewide network of grassroots advocates—called the Brain Wave. You will directly influence policy changes, raise awareness, and help end shame and discrimination. (Join here!) Next, you can help others by sharing your personal story about mental health through Mental Health Colorado's story bank.

6. Build a team of supporters. Many of us are reluctant to rely on others for help, but everyone needs a team of supporters. If you're feeling stressed or lonely and just need someone to chat with, we want you to know we're right there with you. Mental Health Colorado initiated *In This Together* to provide a little bit of social contact for you by phone. So if you're struggling right now, complete this form and we'll reach out to you as soon as possible just to talk!

7. Even when this crisis passes, don't lose sight of prioritizing mental health. We need to be increasingly understanding and compassionate with ourselves and others when it comes to our mental health. The shame of talking about mental health has taken a notable shift during this pandemic. It's not as uncommon now to ask a coworker about their mental health or to FaceTime someone just to admit you're feeling lonely or anxious. These are behaviors we should continue long after this crisis passes. Creating healthier minds is a cultural shift and an ongoing work in progress. And everybody can do it.

If you are more seriously concerned about your own mental health or that of someone close to you, you can call the Colorado Crisis Services at 1-844-493-8255 or text "TALK" to 38255. You can also learn more about taking care of your mental health during the pandemic at www.mentalhealthcolorado.org/free-resources/