Here are ten ways to help others, and yourself:

1. Give blood, if you can. Or spread the word about the need for donations if you aren't able to give. Either way, you'll help blood banks nationwide meet the need for blood, platelets and plasma, which hasn't gone down even though many blood drives have been canceled in areas where coronavirus cases are more common. And an important note: Coronavirus has not been shown to be transmitted through blood transfusion. Visit https://www.redcrossblood.org/ to find a blood drive near you, and read the latest Red Cross guidance for donating blood during the coronavirus pandemic.

2. Give money or food to food banks. People with low incomes, or whose work is being interrupted by cancellations of events, travel, or education due to coronavirus, will need more help than ever. Visit Feeding America's site to find a food bank near you that could use donations of food, toiletries or money, and possibly volunteers. Or visit the national 211 hotline page, or the 211 service operated by the United Way in your area (such as this one for southeastern Michigan) to find out how to give or volunteer to aid organizations.

3. Help people who shouldn't leave home: Older adults, and people with serious illness or disability, should avoid public settings as much as possible because they're more vulnerable to getting seriously ill from coronavirus. But they still need food and human interaction.

- This makes local Meals on Wheels programs more important than ever – and may mean that these programs will have more demand than ever. Look up the program near you (including the Ann Arbor Meals on Wheels program run by Michigan Medicine) to find out how to donate to supplement the funds they get from the government, or how to volunteer.
- Help others at high risk avoid unnecessary trips to settings where they could be exposed to coronavirus, while still having human interaction. This includes your neighbors, relatives and friends who are older than 60, or have a compromised immune system, a chronic condition or a disability.
- Offer to go grocery shopping or to the pharmacy for them, or to pick up books from the library. Spend some time with them, as long as you're feeling well and avoid contact. Look up your local Area Agency on Aging, the AARP Assistance Directory and the Administration for Community Living, to find out what services they offer to older people and people with disabilities.

4. Help set up technology for those who can't leave home. Technology can go a long way to easing the loneliness of being stuck at home to avoid coronavirus exposure. But not everyone is equally comfortable setting up technologies such as smartphone and tablet apps, video chat, streaming video entertainment, or telemedicine visits with doctors or other health providers. If you're technologically savvy, offer to help a neighbor, friend or relative get set up, and act as their "tech support" hotline. Your local library may have a lot of online services, including videos, audiobooks and more, that they offer for free to anyone with a library card. If you offer to help

someone set up an electronic connection to their doctor's office or hospital, they can grant you "proxy" access to help them navigate. But they may need to fill out a form to allow you to have this access. (For instance, here's the information for patients of Michigan Medicine.)

5. Help young children in need. More than a third of children in America are part of low-income families, and coronavirus-related closings and cancellations may hit them hard. Families whose children have serious medical conditions that are sending them to the hospital may be under extra stress because of coronavirus worries. Find a diaper bank near you to give money or diapers and wipes to, so families with infants, toddlers and children with disabilities don't have to spend as much on these essentials. Give, volunteer or gather donations for a children's charity that supports ill children such as the Ronald McDonald House of Ann Arbor or the one nearest you.

6. Strengthen the "health safety net" for low income and uninsured people. People who don't have health insurance, or who might lose jobs or work hours because of coronavirus-related closures and cancellations, still need health care. In fact, it's important that they seek care for coronavirus symptoms and other health needs without having to worry about cost. If they wait to seek care, they may put others at risk, or need more expensive care than they would have if they had gone earlier. Many of them will turn to federally qualified health centers, which serve people regardless of income or insurance status. Find one near you and learn what kinds of donations, supplies or volunteers it needs. These and other safety-net clinics may have special donation needs, such as masks and hand sanitizer, at this time – including at the Hope Clinic, which partners with Michigan Medicine for specialty care.

7. Share information responsibly, and support those who create good information. Help trustworthy stories and explanations related to coronavirus reach more people, by seeking them out from reputable sources such as major media outlets, government agencies, hospitals and nonprofit health organizations. Be wary of claims that sound too good to be true, or that are only being made on one site. Check the dates and origins of articles, videos and memes, and look at fact-checker sites before sharing something. Many news organizations that usually charge for access to their stories have lowered these "paywalls" for coronavirus content. If you don't yet pay to subscribe to a local media organization or donate to support a nonprofit news organization such as public radio or television, consider doing so. This will help them continue to offer local coverage as the pandemic continues – and cover other stories in your local community.

8. Connect with nature. Even if you're avoiding crowds and events in enclosed spaces, you're probably safe in the great outdoors, as long as you follow hygiene precautions like washing your hands thoroughly after touching things others might touch, and staying home if you feel sick. So go for a stroll in a park, a hike in the woods or a walk around the block to reduce stress. Sit in the sun or shade in the yard, patio or balcony. Plant a garden, whether it's in the ground, a raised bed, in containers such as large flowerpots, or on a windowsill.

9. Use art, music and exercise to distract yourself and relieve stress. As more states and cities take action to prevent the spread of the virus, public spaces for entertainment and exercise are closing temporarily or reducing how many people can gather. But that shouldn't stop you from cranking up your favorite music at home or while out walking. And many community arts organizations, yoga studios, gyms and other recreational organizations are creating online-only activities and feeds that you can enjoy from home. Take this time to explore new online radio stations and exercise apps, or to make art or music or work out at home. Help nonprofit organizations and small businesses like local gyms weather the financial storm by making a donation, buying a gift card, or spreading the word on social media about them by writing a positive review or sharing their posts.

10. Help yourself and others practice patience, kindness and understanding. This is uncharted territory for all of us, from health care workers to store clerks to teachers to neighbors. Use and share stress-reducing techniques, anxiety-reducing exercises, breathing techniques, and more. If you're a caregiver for someone else, especially someone at risk from coronavirus, here are some tips.

KARA GAVIN
March 13, 2020 12:20 PM