

Some tips how to cope with anxiety and uncertainty in the difficult situation

When the whole world as we know it is changing, it's awfully hard for the human mind to cope, and more and more doctors are reporting the spread of despair, worry and depression among their patients. It's a frightening time, and all of us are watching the headlines and wondering, "What is going to happen next?" For many people, the uncertainty surrounding coronavirus is the hardest thing to handle. We don't know how exactly we'll be impacted or how bad things might get. And that makes it all too easy to catastrophize and spiral out into overwhelming dread and panic. But there are many things you can do – even in the face of this unique crisis – to manage your anxiety and fears.

Stay informed – but don't obsessively check the news

It's vital to stay informed, particularly about what's happening in your community, so you can follow advised safety precautions and do your part to slow the spread of coronavirus. But there's a lot of misinformation going around, as well as sensationalistic coverage that only feeds into fear. It's important to be discerning about what you read and watch - stick to trustworthy sources such as the CDC, the World Health Organization, and your local public health authorities; limit how often you check for updates (constant monitoring of news and social media feeds can quickly turn compulsive and counterproductive – fueling anxiety rather than easing it; step away from media if you start feeling overwhelmed. If anxiety is an ongoing issue, consider limiting your media consumption to a specific time frame and time of day (e.g. thirty minutes each evening at 6 pm).

Keep up to date - check but not check news every minute

In this moment of great uncertainty many of us respond by endlessly searching the Internet for answers, but this strategy will get us nowhere - aside from feeling drained, anxious, and overwhelmed. When you feel yourself getting caught up in fear of what might happen, try to shift your focus to things you can control. For example, you can't control how severe the coronavirus outbreak is in your city or town, but you can take steps to reduce your own personal risk (and the risk you'll unknowingly spread it to others) by washing your hands frequently, staying home as much as possible, even if you don't feel sick, avoiding all non-essential shopping and travel, keeping 6 feet of distance between yourself and others when out, getting plenty of sleep, which helps support your immune system, following all recommendations from health authorities, etc.

Plan for what you can

It's natural to be concerned about what may happen if your workplace closes, your children have to stay home from school, you or someone you love gets sick, or you have to self-quarantine. While these possibilities can be scary to think about, being proactive can help relieve at least some of the anxiety.

Stay connected – even when physically isolated

Social distancing comes with its own risks. Humans are social animals. We're hardwired for connection. Isolation and loneliness can cause anxiety and depression, and even impact our physical health. That's why it's important to stay connected as best we can and reach out for support when we need it, even as we cut back on in-person socializing. Social media can be a powerful tool - not only for connecting with friends, family, and acquaintances - but for feeling connected in a greater sense to our communities, country, and the world. It reminds us we're not alone.

Be kind to yourself

This is an extraordinarily trying time, and all the tried-and-true stress management strategies apply, such as eating healthy meals, getting plenty of sleep, and meditating. Beyond that, here are some tips for practicing self-care in the face of the unique disruptions caused by the coronavirus.

- **Treat yourself with care.** Go easy on yourself if you're experiencing more depression or anxiety than usual. You're not alone in your struggles.

- **Maintain a routine as best you can.** Even if you're stuck at home, try to stick to your regular sleep, school, meal, or work schedule. This can help you maintain a sense of normalcy.

- **Take time out for activities you enjoy.** Read a good book, watch a comedy, play a fun board or video game, make something – whether it's a new recipe, a craft, or a piece of art. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as it takes you out of your worries.

- **Find ways to exercise.** Staying active will help you release anxiety, relieve stress, and manage your mood. While the gym and group classes are out, you can still cycle, hike, or walk. Or if you're stuck at home, look online for exercise videos you can follow. There are many things you can do even without equipment, such as yoga and exercises that use your own bodyweight.

- **Take up a relaxation practice.** When stressors throw your nervous system out of balance, relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and yoga can bring you back into a state of equilibrium. Regular practice delivers the greatest benefits, so see if you can set aside even a little time every day.

We hope that those tips will help you to cope with this difficult situation. Stay healthy!