

Tips for Managing Stress Related to COVID-19

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It's normal to have some anxiety about the coronavirus pandemic. It's uncharted territory for most of us. These tips are meant to help us manage our anxiety, so that it doesn't spiral out of control.

1. **Create a daily routine.** Structure can create a sense of normalcy. It gives us purpose and keeps us from worrying and re-playing our thoughts. The list could include minor things, like make breakfast and clean up dishes, to larger projects like cleaning the garage, or even scheduling time to read or watch Netflix. Consider activities you tend to put off: reading the classics, cleaning out flower beds, doing taxes, separating clothes to donate.
2. **Find connection.** If you live with others, interact with conversation, games, and shared chores. Since we are encouraged to limit in-person contact with friends and extended family, create connection through phone calls, email, and Facetime. Reach out to those who live alone.
3. **Limit media.** Try to limit your exposure to television, print, and social media news. Perhaps just 30-60 min/day. It's important to keep up on the major developments, but it's not helpful to have 24/7 news coverage on in the background. I suggest a half hour in the morning, or the 1-hr daily briefings by the governor on the Ohio Channel (airs on PBS Ohio channel or can be watched online).
4. **Record your experience.** This is an historic time. What will you want to tell your grandchildren or great-children? Make short selfie videos, blog, journal, write letters that describe your thoughts and feelings. Not only will this be something you can have for years to come, but it is a way to help you cope in the present. It helps give us space from our swirling thoughts and emotions. Re-frame this as an adventure—a time when we came together to do the right thing.
5. **Get outside.** We know that nature is one of the best anxiolytics (anti-anxiety). Go for a walk in your neighborhood or drive to a local hiking trail. Say hello to others passing by. This will help us feel more connected.
6. **Move your body.** Exercise is another natural anxiolytic. Walking, running, and biking can all be done outside and don't require a gym. There are also free videos available on YouTube for strength training and yoga. Yoga with Adriene is popular.
7. **Calm your mind.** Guided meditation can help us become more present-focused. So that we aren't constantly obsessing about the past or worried for the future. Calm and Headspace apps offer good beginning tutorials.
8. **Seek help.** If you find you can't stop thinking about the situation, or experience changes in eating (too much or too little) or sleeping (too much or too little), or have thoughts about harming yourself, please reach out to a professional. You might start with your PCP. Other options include searching Psychology Today or your insurance company for a therapist in your community. Psychologists, counselors, and social workers all provide talk therapy and can help you manage your reaction. Many are offering behavioral telehealth sessions.