

COVID-19: Emotional Health

CDC: Taking Care of your Emotional Health

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>

Take the following steps to cope with a disaster:

Take care of your body– Try to eat healthy well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Learn more about wellness for mental health.

Connect with others– Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships, and build a strong support system.
Take breaks– Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try taking in deep breaths. Try to do activities you usually enjoy.

Stay informed When you feel that you are missing information, you may become more stressed or nervous. Watch, listen to, or read the news for updates from officials. Be aware that there may be rumors during a crisis, especially on social media. Always check your sources and turn to reliable sources of information like your local government authorities.

Avoid too much exposure to news Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do enjoyable activities and return to normal life as much as possible and check for updates between breaks.

Seek help when needed If distress impacts activities of your daily life for several days or weeks, talk to a clergy member, counselor, or doctor, or contact the SAMHSA helpline at 1-800-985-5990.

<p>National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800)-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) <i>Chat online:</i> https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/</p> <p><i>Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio</i> 1-888-628-9454</p> <p><i>Options For Deaf + Hard of Hearing</i> 1-800-799-4889</p> <p><i>Veterans Crisis Line</i> 1-800-273-8255 <i>Text 838255</i></p> <p>San Francisco Suicide Prevention Hotline (415) 781-0500</p> <p>Safe & Sound - Parental Stress Support Line 415-441-KIDS (5437)</p>	<p>Friendship Line - Institute on Aging SF 24-hour crisis line for people over 60 or those living with a disability 800-971-0016 https://www.ioaging.org/services/all-inclusive-health-care/friendship-line</p> <p>Asian LifeNet Hotline (Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, Fujianese are offered) 1-877-990-8585</p> <p>SAMHSA's National Helpline 1-800-662-HELP</p> <p>24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and español) Website: http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline</p>
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Taking Care of your Behavioral Health - Social Distancing Isolation, and Quarantine:
<https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4894.pdf>

Feeling Anxiety About Coronavirus? A Psychologist Offers Tips to Stay Clearheaded

By Nina Bai

https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2020/03/416836/feeling-anxiety-about-coronavirus-psychologist-offers-tips-stay-clearheaded?utm_source=constantcontact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=pulsetoday&utm_content=edition119

As cases of the novel coronavirus infection, COVID-19, increase across the U.S., many people may be feeling anxious.

We spoke to UC San Francisco psychologist Elissa Epel, PhD, who studies stress, about the difference between anxiety and panic, and steps you can take to prevent panic and be prepared.

Some anxiety is normal, but our anxious minds can easily go into panic mode

“The good news about the widespread anxiety is that it is fueling big changes fast—many people in affected areas are being very careful to limit exposure. Anxiety fosters prevention and safeguarding behaviors. Prevention reduces anxiety,” said Epel

“However, when threats are uncertain, such as the current coronavirus situation, our anxious minds can easily overestimate the actual threat and underestimate our ability to cope with it.” Epel noted that people with pre-existing anxiety conditions are particularly vulnerable.

“While some anxiety helps us cope, extreme anxiety can become coronavirus panic. When we are in a panic state, we suffer, we stress out our children, we are more likely to make mistakes and engage in irrational decisions and behavior,” said Epel. Panic can create new problems, such as overbuying that creates supply chain shortages of masks and sanitizers, and xenophobia toward certain groups.

Keep in mind that your anxiety influences those around you, said Epel. “Too much anxiety creates emotion contagion and spreads panic. That’s not helpful.”

Children will naturally have questions about the coronavirus, said Epel, and she pointed to resources to help you talk to your children and help them manage their own anxiety.

Limit media exposure and stick with reliable sources

“It’s tempting to check for updates, but checking several times a day can keep us in an escalated state of anxiety,” said Epel. “We then easily transmit that type of exaggerated anxiety to our children and those around us.” Focusing on catastrophic thoughts and predictions, especially given the examples on social media, can fuel panicky feelings.

Instead, she advises sticking to reliable sources of coronavirus information such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Be informed about the key safety precautions, and be supportive to others, helping them think more calmly about it.

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Reduce anxiety by reducing your risk

“Don’t feel silly or embarrassed about taking reasonable precautions,” said Epel. For example, follow the safety advice from the CDC, such as frequent handwashing; stay home if you don’t feel well; get enough sleep and take good care of your immune system. “Preparing a plan for the future, such as minimizing exposure to large crowds, makes sense and can help reduce anxiety,” said Epel.

“During this uncertain time, it’s important to keep up your self-care routine, or even add something to it, to reduce your somatic anxiety, the anxiety we store up in our bodies,” said Epel. Consider what helps you most, such as taking a walk in nature, meditating, exercising, or talking to a friend.

“Make time to step back from screens, and make sure to connect with people about things other than just this issue,” said Epel.