

Managing Anxiety with COVID-19

These days, it seems impossible to go anywhere, listen to anything, or watch any shows without hearing about the COVID-19 outbreak.

Though I wasn't particularly concerned about this virus at first, I have become increasingly anxious as wide-spread closures occur. Going to the grocery store has become an anxiety-producing event because of the empty shelves and the general air of panic. My rising anxiety has become intense enough that I have had to develop strategies for managing it. So as a parent, a community member, and a concerned citizen, I have found the following to be helpful:

- 1. As much or as little as you need to, limit the time you spend taking in information** about COVID-19 via the media or through contact with other people as you are able. Take note when the information becomes too much for you and stop for the day. (For me, this means that I can spend no more than fifteen minutes checking the latest updates from the county, the school district, or the Center for Disease Control before I have to get off social media because I can feel my anxiety levels rising.)
- 2. Try to maintain a routine**, preferably one as close to your normal routine as possible. Stay hydrated, eat at least two small meals with protein daily, exercise, and rest.
- 3. Follow the suggested guidelines**—it stresses me out to see neighborhood kids congregating together when we've been told to practice social distancing. Even though it's hard to keep the kids from playing with their friends, it may be even more stressful for others to see that people aren't following the rules. We want to work together to help everyone out.
- 4. Be kind and considerate to others**—it's amazing what a little kindness does to ease everyone's fears and anxiety. Really consider whether you need all that toilet paper. Maybe try using less instead of buying more.
- 5. Spend your day engaged in activities that bring you joy.** This could be horseback riding, doing yoga, cooking, or going for a walk while maintaining the social distancing guidelines. Don't forget to smile and say hello to those you see.
- 6. If you're working from home, take breaks** to check in with friends and family, play a game, watch fun videos, or meditate.
- 7. Control your thoughts – focus on the positive.** This could be a daily gratitude or mindfulness practice. Be aware your focus may be shorter than on "regular" days; that is to be expected.
- 8. Call, Facetime, Skype, text or otherwise connect** with people you care about.
- 9. Laugh and be silly.** Laughter creates endorphins for the body that help you feel good.
- 10. Rely on your belief system.** Remind yourself of what you believe. Focus on that because this too shall pass.

If each of us can manage our anxiety a little more, we may help others to manage theirs. I know how much it helps me to connect with people who are calm and steady during a situation like this. I hope that by managing my own anxiety, I can be that steadying presence for others.

If you find that you need someone to talk to, or are having trouble managing your own stress or anxiety, call our new support line listed below or call 970.252.3200 to ask about setting up an appointment via phone or video.

The Center Support Line

A free, 24-hour talk line open to our community during difficult times.
If you are feeling stressed, anxious, or just need someone to talk to, call—we can help.



The Center Support Line: 970.252.6220

Call 970.252.3200 to learn more or to make an appointment. www.centermh.org