

Managing Stress during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

It's terrifying to learn that an illness such as coronavirus (COVID-19) is spreading across the globe. The early stages of a pandemic can be especially anxiety-provoking. During this time, you don't know how widespread or deadly the illness is going to end up being.

Feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness, and uncertainty are normal during a pandemic. Fortunately, being proactive about your mental health can help to keep both your mind and body stronger.

Ways to take care of yourself include:

- Reading the news from reliable sources (and take breaks from the news)
 - Recognizing the things you can control, like having good hygiene
 - Taking measures only if recommended by the CDC
- Seeking professional help from a licensed mental health professional if necessary
 - Practicing self-care

Ways to Manage Stress

The way you cope with stress can go a long way toward ensuring that you're taking helpful action in managing your mental health. Here are ways to help you ease anxiety surrounding coronavirus.

Read news from trustworthy sources.

Avoid media outlets that build hype or dwell on things that can't be controlled. Instead, turn to sources that give reliable information about how to protect yourself, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Develop an action plan.

There are always some steps you can take to decrease risk. It may be as simple as washing your hands well and limiting travel. But recognizing these can remind you to focus on things you have control over. Just make sure the steps you're taking are actions recommended by reputable sources.

Set limits on your media consumption.

Tuning into media stories that talk about how fast an illness is spreading, or how many people are getting sick, will increase your anxiety. Limit your media consumption to a certain time frame or a certain number of articles.

While it's helpful to stay informed, it's also important you don't allow yourself to be bombarded with anxiety-provoking news all day.

Avoid the herd mentality.

Be aware that many people take action that doesn't help. Don't jump on a bandwagon just because other people are wearing masks or performing specific cleaning rituals (unless those things are recommended by the CDC). Otherwise, your actions could prove to be unhelpful—or perhaps even destructive.

Practice good self-care.

Eating a balanced diet, getting plenty of sleep, and engaging in leisure activities are always key to helping you stay as physically and psychologically healthy as possible during stressful times. Good self-care also keeps your immune system robust.

Seek professional help.

If your mental health is being impacted by the stress of the coronavirus, then you may want to seek professional help. A licensed mental health professional can help you manage your fears while also empowering you to make the best decisions for you and your family.