

Seven Science-based Strategies to Cope with Coronavirus Anxiety

1. Practice tolerating uncertainty

Intolerance of uncertainty makes people vulnerable to anxiety. The solution is to learn to face uncertainty in daily life by easing back on certainty-seeking behaviors.

Start small: As you build your tolerance-of-uncertainty muscle, you can work to reduce the number of times a day you consult the internet for updates on the outbreak.

2. Tackle the anxiety paradox

Anxiety rises proportionally to how much one tries to get rid of it. “What you resist persists.” Avoiding the experience of anxiety almost always backfires.

Instead, allow your anxious thoughts, feelings and physical sensations to wash over you, accepting anxiety as an integral part of human experience. When waves of coronavirus anxiety show up, notice and describe the experience to yourself or others without judgment. Resist the urge to escape or calm your fears by obsessively reading virus updates. Paradoxically, facing anxiety in the moment will lead to less anxiety over time.

3. Transcend existential anxiety

Health threats trigger the fear that underlies all fears: fear of death. Try connecting to your life’s purpose and sources of meaning, be it spirituality, relationships, or pursuit of a cause. Take responsibility for how you live your life. Focusing on or discovering the “why” of life can go a long way in helping you deal with unavoidable anxiety

4. Don’t underestimate human resiliency

Many people worry how they would cope with a quarantine, a daycare closure or a lost paycheck. Human minds are good at predicting the worst.

Research shows that people tend to overestimate how badly they will be affected by negative events and underestimate how well they will cope with and adjust to difficult situations.

Be mindful that you are more resilient than you think. It can help attenuate your anxiety.

5. Don’t get sucked into overestimating the threat

Everyone should be serious about taking all the reasonable precautions against infection.

However, people also should realize that humans tend to exaggerate the danger of unfamiliar threats. To reduce anxiety, limiting your exposure to coronavirus news can be helpful.

6. Strengthen self-care

During these anxiety-provoking times, it is important to remember the tried-and-true anxiety prevention and reduction strategies. Get adequate sleep, exercise regularly, practice mindfulness, spend time in nature and employ relaxation techniques when stressed.

7. Seek professional help if you need it

If you experience anxiety symptoms that interfere with school, work, maintaining close relationships, socializing or taking care of yourself please seek counseling. Counselors are on campus and available to work with you via telephone. Connect with us via email at counseling@citytech.cuny.edu and a counselor will arrange to meet with you.

Based on writings from Jelena Kecmanovic, Adjunct Professor Psychology – Georgetown University

FOUR CORE STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS AND ANXIETY

1. ATTENTION - CENTERING TECHNIQUES
To neutralize anxiety, it can often help to use techniques designed to focus attention beyond anxious thoughts.

- MEDITATION
- BREATHING
- VISUALIZATION

2. EXPRESSIVE, CREATIVE STRATEGIES
To channel anxious thoughts or feelings in more productive ways, we might identify specific outlets to express creativity, such as working on a project, drawing, and athletics.

- WORKING ON A PROJECT
- ARTS
- PHYSICAL MOVEMENT

3. REFLECTION EXPLORATION STRATEGIES
To monitor where anxiety arises, become more aware of anxiety triggers, and reflect on anxious thoughts and feelings, we might try strategies that foster self-observation.

- JOURNALING
- SELF-MONITORING
- COMMUNICATION

4. HEALTHY LIFESTYLE VALUES
To reduce residual feelings of anxiety, it could help to turn attention toward healthy habits, healthy relationships, healthy pleasures, and a healthy environment.

- NUTRITION
- RELATIONSHIPS
- EXERCISE

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Adapted from Shelly Harrell, PhD

Resources

For Everyone

- [Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#)

For Communities

- [Coping with stress during an infectious disease outbreakpdf iconexternal icon](#)
- [Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health during an Infectious Disease Outbreakexternal icon](#)

For Families and Children

- [Helping Children Cope with Emergencies](#)
- [Coping After a Disasterpdf icon](#) – A Ready Wrigley activity book for children age 3-10

For First Responders

- [Emergency Responders: Tips for taking care of yourself](#)
- [Disaster Technical Assistance Centerexternal icon](#) (SAMHSA)

Summary:

Things you can do to support yourself:

- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. 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 some other activities you enjoy to return to your normal life.
- Connect with others. Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking.