



## A Counselor's Tips for Managing COVID Anxiety



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If you are feeling anxious about the coronavirus, or COVID-19, thank your body for alerting you that there is something to be concerned about. It is doing what it is supposed to do.

Take note and practice good hygiene, eat nutritiously, drink plenty of water, keep an eye on your temperature, and engage in social distancing as recommended by the CDC and WHO. Then find ways to assure your body you have things under control as well as possible by using the following coping tips.

### 8 Tips for Coping with COVID-19 Anxiety

#### 1. Address stress.

Remember the difference between productive stress and destructive stress. Productive stress encourages us to take action and work toward solving a problem. Destructive stress does not change anything and depletes our energy and mental well-being with very little outcome. We can't avoid stress, but we can choose to gear it toward the productive kind and use healthy coping skills when we find ourselves stuck in more destructive cycles.

#### 2. Acknowledge your feelings.

We can be with our discomfort when it does arise. We can handle difficult feelings. We can survive pain. We can overcome challenges. If we try too quickly to escape our feelings, we are reiterating the disempowering idea that our feelings are more powerful than we are. Do your best not to push away or over attach to feelings. Just acknowledge them, be curious about what this experience may hold for you, and let them go when you are ready.

#### 3. Create calm.

Remember that we may operate best and think most clearly when we remain calm. By practicing relaxation exercises, meditation, yoga, and anything else that supports our nervous system, we are also decreasing inflammation and increasing immunity.

#### 4. Reconnect with nature.

Among the obvious pleasantries of the onset of fall as sunlight decreases, try to spend some time outdoors. A daily dose of sunlight (even if the clouds are grey) provides vitamin D and helps regulate serotonin, which lifts mood, improves immune function, and can help regulate sleep. It may also help our T cells, which are responsible for fighting infection and helping the immune system function optimally. Organic compounds found outdoors called phytoncides can also boost both mood and immune function.

#### 5. Focus on hope.

Notice that while this pandemic is indeed a tragedy, many people have been looking out for each other. Notice the ways communities come together when faced with shared challenges. We are so much stronger together, and times like these remind us of that.

#### 6. Practice gratitude.

While we are paying such close attention to keeping surfaces clean and rationing our home goods, please also pay attention to the parts that are working and all that you are grateful for. There is beauty that exists among the fear and heartache if we keep our eyes and hearts open to it.

#### 7. Nurture yourself.

Nurture your relationship with yourself, loved ones, and community. Or finish up a fun project that you had to put on hold to keep up with the daily grind.

#### 8. BREATHE.

Not too close to each other perhaps, but please remember that deep breathing helps calm the body and mind. Try the 4-7-8 breath to activate the vagus nerve and parasympathetic nervous system, which can act as a brake for slowing down anxiety. A big deep breath in for a count of 4, hold for 7, and release slowly for a count of 8.

We have been through difficult things before, and we moved through them. This too shall pass. Do your best to take a healthy authority over what you can control, love on yourself and your neighbors (from a distance), and find ways to appreciate the opportunities within the obstacle. We are in this together.

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