COVID-19: Tips & Resources for Coping with Stress and Anxiety

We're all facing a time of great uncertainty. Many of our patients and family members are overwhelmed, with feelings of fear and anxiety. Strong emotions are completely normal during a crisis, and everyone experiences them differently, depending on their circumstances.

As we all find the part we're to play in this shift, following are some tips and resources for coping with stress from CLF's Patient Services Coordinators.

- **Lean on a therapist or social worker**

- **Accept your anxiety in the current situation** as an inevitable part of life that comes and goes. With no road map or precedent, you can't fail at this. We're all doing the best we can in an impossible situation, and right now letting go seems critical so you can focus on the most important issues in your life.

- **Stick to a routine.** Go to bed and wake up at reasonable times, vary your schedule, and include time for both work and self-care.

- **Eat well and stay hydrated.** Stress and eating don't go well together, leading to over-indulging, forgetting to eat, or avoiding food altogether. Drink water, eat nutritious foods, and challenge yourself to cook a new recipe!

- **Connect with others.** Call a friend or someone who may be lonely, like a senior citizen. Or set up a virtual session and invite a group to have happy hour, process their worries, tell jokes or read a story (with kids). You could even host a virtual dinner party.

Houseparty   zoom   Google Hangouts

- **Move your body:** Walk or run around the neighborhood (keeping 6 feet away from those you pass). Additionally, many fitness companies and coaches are offering FREE workouts during this time – from dance and yoga to low-impact cardio.

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- **Find a way to be of service:** Get groceries or pick up prescriptions for your elderly neighbor, rake someone's yard or wash their car.

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- **Experience something new**, like the wonder of the ocean or safari – no matter where you are.

- **Reduce or limit news coverage** to temper thoughts about the pandemic.

- **Read a book or watch a movie**, and one that does not involve illness, pandemics or contagious diseases.

- **Control what you can**, like washing your hands properly, staying in when you're feeling sick and sanitizing surfaces.

- **Get plenty of rest.** Now's the time to get adequate sleep per night and take a nap if you feel the need.

- Try **deep breathing** using the **4-7-8 technique.**

4-7-8 Deep Breathing Technique

- Empty the lungs of air

- Breathe in quietly through the nose for 4 seconds

- Hold the breath for a count of 7 seconds

- Exhale forcefully through the mouth, pursing the lips and making a "whoosh" sound, for 8 seconds

- Repeat the cycle up to 4 times

- **Practice mindfulness.** Studies show mindfulness meditation can improve both mental and physical health, reducing stress and anxiety, enhancing self-awareness, and cultivating positive emotions.

Free Mindfulness Resources:

headspace   InsightTimer   TEN PERCENT HAPPIER   Calm   meditative story

Other helpful articles:

1. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fcoping.html

2. https://www.virusanxiety.com/take-care

3. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/smarter-living/coronavirus-anxiety-tips.html