



Covid-19 Psychological Care

In times of added stress, uncertainty, and disruption to our normal routine, it is normal to feel unsettled and apprehensive. Our tendency is to focus on the stressor, which is usually something we can not control, therefore increasing our feelings of unsettledness. Just like there are things we can do to protect and minimize our physical exposure to this virus (i.e. washing hands, etc.), there are things we can do to protect and minimize negative psychological exposure as well. Here are a few that have proven to be helpful in times like these:

1. Limit amount of time spent watching the news. As tempting as it is to stay focused on the news 24/7, it is not a good contributor to our wellbeing. Get information from trusted sites such as the CDC and WHO, then turn your focus to meaningful activities such as reading a book, listening and/or playing music, watching a movie.
2. Maintain as much of your routine as possible – exercise (if not able to go to your regular gym, go for walks, running, bicycling, you tube exercise videos, etc.), regular meals (plan ahead to avoid stress eating), connection with others (phone, face-time, etc.), and staying with a regular schedule for sleep and wake up times.
3. Practice mindfulness – stay present focusing on right now. In times of uncertainty our thoughts tend to drift into tomorrow and worse case scenarios, which often make us miss what is possible in the present. Training our minds to be present right now helps us to focus on what is at hand and what is possible for us to do in real time.
4. If you have experienced past trauma or have suffered or currently suffer from an anxiety condition, you may experience a surge of related symptoms. Some helpful ways to reduce anxiety are:
 - a) Take a deep breath and practice a breath meditation. Here are a couple I find helpful:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQjGqtH-2YI>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFSc7Ck0Ao0>
 - b) Accept that you are anxious – it is a feeling like any other and as such it can come and go. Observe it without judgment, knowing it will pass.
 - c) Question your thoughts – when anxious, our thoughts play tricks on us. Confront the thoughts by asking, “Is this worry realistic, is this likely to happen, what is in my power to do?”
 - d) Use a calming visualization. Here is one of my favorites:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9dY1zeX-EM>

e) Use positive self-talk such as: “This anxiety feels bad, but I can use strategies to manage it”

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