

Managing the Emotional Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

On January 21, 2020, the first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported. Since then, we have been inundated with terms such as COVID-19, coronavirus, self-quarantine and social distancing. Not only is there a lot to learn about the current pandemic, there are a lot of emotions. Fear, sadness, confusion and anger are just a few of the feelings we are experiencing. Not only do we experience our own emotions, we also absorb those of our friends, families, children, loved ones, and what is communicated on social media. It can be overwhelming!

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.”– [Marie Curie](#)

Emotional Roller Coaster Ride

We all feel different things at different times, and we will continue to do so as the pandemic evolves. It’s a roller coaster ride of emotions. The good news is these feelings are normal and the even better news is we all have qualities that can help us be resilient. We just need to activate them. It is equally important to address any emotions that are causing excessive worry including feelings of being out of control, unable to function or think clearly. Contact PAS at (800) 356-0845 if you need assistance.

Exercise your resilience:

- Talk to a friend or family member you trust
- Get plenty of rest and drink plenty of fluids
- Exercise
- Meditate
- Keep a normal schedule-including a sleep schedule
- Eat regular balanced meals
- Don’t use alcohol or drugs to help cope
- Limit worry and agitation by minimizing media input – turn off the notifications on your phone. Check them when it’s a good time for you.
- Avoid news and heavy topic programs right before bedtime
- Use coping strategies that have been helpful in previous stressful situations
- Learn about the facts of the pandemic by consulting reliable sources like World Health Organization (WHO), Center for Disease Control (CDC) or a local or state public health agency
- Consult with a professional counselor at PAS by calling (800) 356-0845. Counselors are available 24/7/365.

Nurturing Resilience in Children

In addition to taking care of ourselves, many of us have to also consider our children. How can we best support them in an ever-changing pandemic? Parents should expect that different children may respond to stressful events in a variety of ways. It is not uncommon for their behaviors and demeanor to change and fluctuate. Don’t worry; your calm response will help them bounce back. Providing facts about what has happened, what is currently going on and how they can protect themselves from the virus helps them focus on what they can do. Use words that are age-appropriate and easy to understand. If you don’t know the answer to a question, it is OK to say you don’t know.

Support for your child can include:

- Responding to your child's reaction in a healthy and positive way
- Listening when they want to talk, even if it is at an inconvenient time of the day
- Providing reassurance
- Giving them extra love and attention
- Acknowledging their feelings, even if you don't agree
- Speaking with kind and supportive words and tone
- Continuing a regular routine and schedule as much as possible, including sleep schedule
- Scheduling family time and play time
- Consulting with a professional counselor and parenting coach at PAS by calling (800) 356-0845 Counselors are available 24/7/365

But I am still anxious!

The reality is the pandemic news is everywhere; you can't escape it. There are many things you can't control, but the key to managing your anxiety is to focus on what you can control: your thoughts, actions, associations, and lifestyle. This is key to a happier life.

With that in mind, here are some tips to help you manage stress and anxiety:

- Learn your triggers. Carefully note what sets off your anxiety and limit your exposure.
- Spot quickly and interrupt negative feedback loops with positive reinforcement. Anxiety often comes from playing out "what if" and doomsday scripts in your head. Keep motivational, spiritual, and affirming literature at hand, or even your own private "positivity hot link" on your computer—music, video, narrative, or images that instantly help you "reset" your mind.
- Cut yourself a break when you're overwhelmed. Agree to do what you can, when you can. Let that be enough for the day.
- Let go of worst-case scenarios. Most of what we fear never comes to pass. When or if a crisis ever hits, options will appear at that time to help you deal with it.
- Realize that fretting is not productive. The world doesn't change because you are concerned and unhappy. It's OK to be cheerful and at peace even in the face of misfortune.
- Get moving. Worry is undirected energy. Put that energy to use on something positive and productive.
- Seek out positive, uplifting people. Your happiness is directly related to your influences.
- Learn relaxation techniques like yoga and deep breathing exercises.
- Physically exercise regularly. This is one of your most powerful "feel better" strategies.
- Accept that it takes time to change. Hint: Focus on lowering the intensity and length of worrying, rather than eradicating it completely.
- Don't beat yourself up for feeling anxious. A certain amount of stress is unavoidable.
- Consult with a professional counselor at PAS by calling 800-356-0845. Counselors are available 24/7/365.

There is a lot of uncertainty about coronavirus and how long we will need to be in a heightened state of awareness. Don't Panic! Put behaviors in place that are helpful to you and that you and your family can do for the long haul. PAS has the knowledge, tools, and resources to help. Don't hesitate to contact us for assistance and information 24/7/365 at (800) 356-0845.

For additional information, please consult www.paseap.com and the below resources.

Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

American Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org/about-us/news-and-events/news/2020/coronavirus-safety-and-readiness-tips-for-you.html>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <https://www.hhs.gov>