

TIPS ON MANAGING YOUR ANXIETY DURING LOCKDOWN





The outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19 has impacted people across the world in various ways: physically, emotionally, socially, economically and psychologically. The world is dealing with the very real challenges of widespread serious illness, job loss, grief and isolation, which brings about fear and anxiety.

The key to better mental health is how we can look after ourselves and respond at this difficult time. We might feel helpless in light of what is unfolding but we can always choose our response and take committed action in self-care.

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Here are some tips for emotional health in the face of uncertainty and how to respond effectively to the Corona crisis:

- Stay informed, but be mindful of how much time you are engaging in COVID-19 media coverage. It is important to know what is going on, and the latest recommendations for staying healthy, but you do not need moment-to-moment or hourly updates. Excessive exposure to the news will lead to increased anxiety and worry.
- Engage in the present: Refocus your attention on what activity you are doing. Using your senses to anchor you back into the present. By doing so it helps to move you away from unhelpful worries and grounds you while giving you a sense of control over your actions. When choosing activities choose meaningful activities.
- Get outside while taking responsibility to stay 2 meters apart from others. Physical exercise is important for good mental health.
- Make sure to call your friends and family to ensure you are connecting with others. Too much time alone and not engaging with others can lead to increased time in our mind and worries.
- Connect with your values: What is truly important to you in your life? What sort of person do you want to be as you go through this crisis? For example are you showing kindness and care towards yourself? What kind words or actions can you say and do during this time? What care are you showing towards those that are important to you or your community? It might be a simple phone call to your loved ones or staying 2 meters apart in the community. Ask yourself everyday 'what can I do today that improves my life or the life of others that I live with. There may be current restrictions on some values with the current crisis but if you engage in the values that are manageable it will help to ground you, give you direction, routine and significant purpose all of which helps to boost mood. Finally, ask yourself, how do I want to look back on the way that I responded and cared for myself during the Coronavirus?
- Take care of your physical health. It can be tempting to comfort-eat and consume excessive quantities of alcohol or caffeine when we are stressed, but this is not a good approach for either our mental or our physical health. Rather, we need to eat healthy to nourish our minds and body.
- Remember to plan for the future. A lot of plans might need to be on hold for now, but the current crisis will end. An approach of acceptance while taking active healthy actions is helpful rather than engaging in unhelpful angry ruminative thoughts, which can lead to depression and anxiety.
- Build routine into your day to help reduce anxiety. Routine brings certainty, which is helpful during times of uncertainty. Stick to your routine and ensure the routine is in line with your purpose filled values.

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- Focus on what you can control. When we feel anxious and are faced with a high degree of uncertainty we tend to feel 'out of control', therefore it is important to focus on what is within your control. Examples of what is within our control is our responses, turning off the news, showing kindness to yourself, problem solving as opposed to worrying. .
- Let go of time spent worrying. Increase your awareness of how much time you are worrying. Are you engaging in 'what if' thoughts?, catastrophizing thoughts? Jumping to conclusions? If so, challenge your thinking. Are your thoughts FACT or Worry? We can't predict the future and an anxious mind will tend to quickly jump to the worst case thoughts but the impact of worry will leave you feeling heightened anxiety. Try to focus on the present and let go of time spent worrying.
- Finally, make a self-care plan to follow everyday to include all of the above. Aim to reduce the areas that are depleting you and increase areas of nourishment.

I hope that you find these tips helpful. Feel free to share to others so they too can take small steps to look after their mental health during this time.

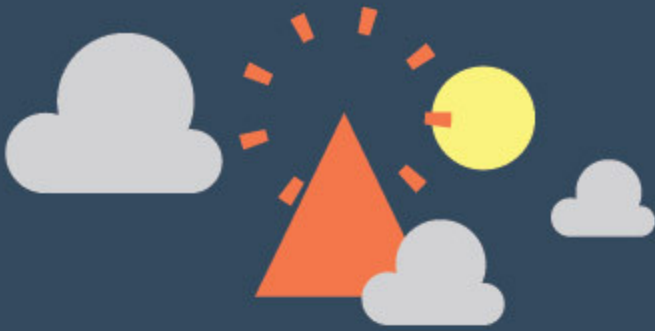
If you feel you need extra support, The Consulting Clinic is offering online therapy appointments to support you during the pandemic.

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If you are struggling with your mental health as a result of the Coronavirus, the team at The Consulting Clinic are here to help.

CBT is the treatment of choice for anxiety, depression and a range of psychological problems. Our Psychologists have specialist training in CBT, therefore you will receive the highest standard of CBT.

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