

“One of the amazing things about the human species—once harmless critters not much more than monkeys running around—is that, over time, we have become very creative. We’ve adapted to survive. That’s what people will rely on now—coming up with incredibly imaginative ways to find connections even when they’re not in the same physical space together.”

- Augustin Fuentes, Evolutionary Anthropologist

With COVID19 we are all stressed. We are being asked to change and change rapidly. Below are some methods that can help navigate the stress, anxiety and trauma of this crisis and the next.

1. Ground yourself in what you can control

- Engage in physical activity with social distancing. If you do use the gym, take hand sanitizer and wipe down every machine with the cleaning solution provided. Follow your gym's health precautions as directed. There are numerous chair yoga, Tai Chi, QiGong, and yoga videos to do from your home on Prime and YouTube.
- Stay in contact with your network of family and friends, but limit destructive thinking and focus on sharing how much you love them and good memories.
- Practice good sleep hygiene. Melatonin and CBD can help with sleep.
- Maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- Use a grounding exercise to help you return to your body when you get stressed out. Grounding brings your mind back into your body and slows down the nervous system. Try this: Take two breaths. Name one thing you can see. Look for 3 details in that item. Name one thing you can hear. Name one thing you can touch. Name one thing you can smell. Another quick grounding technique is to rub your hands together quickly like you are trying to keep warm and push your feet into the ground, wiggling your toes.
- Try to maintain good nutrition. Anxiety causes our stress hormones to go crazy causing us to crave sugar, caffeine and salt. Try fruit to replace sugar or peanut butter.

2. Educate yourself about the signs and symptoms, but limit your google searching time to 30 minutes, once a day. Use trusted sources like the CDC and the World Health Organization. Avoid opinion or sensationalized news.

3. Avoid overwhelming yourself

- **Take a media break.** This includes social media. Spend time instead, reading a book, doing a craft, listening to music, etc. Anything away from social, television, internet and print media.
- **Breathe.** Count to four on the inhale, hold it for 2 counts, then exhale to the count of 7. Repeat at least 5 times, going slower as you go through the progression. For small and elementary aged children, practice ball breathing, making a ball with your hands that expands as you inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Try the candle breath, inhale and then exhale long trying to slowly blow out the candle that is their finger. There are numerous breathing instructional videos on YouTube.
- **Use positive affirmations.** Pick one affirmation or positive quote each morning and remind yourself of it during the day, saying it over and over. Say it to yourself or out loud three times in the morning. Repeat it three times when you are combatting a negative or destructively anxious thought. For example, “Loving God surrounds me and holds me in His protection.” or “God is a healing God and He will guide me through this.” It can be secular as well, such as, “I can do this today.” or “I am going to be ok.” or “Just breathe”. You can google “positive affirmations” and “positive Christian affirmations” to find some.
- **Start a gratitude practice.** Whether you keep a journal, a computer document, do it on Facebook or just do it in your head, each morning and evening, along with your affirmation, think of three things that you are thankful and something that was the best part of your day.

4. Practice self-compassion and self soothing

- As self-compassion researcher **Kristin Neff** recommends, acknowledge that this situation feels really difficult right now, and explore how you can comfort and care for yourself in this moment. Dr. Neff has numerous videos talking about self compassion online.
- Make a list of things that you can do that soothe you. Maybe it's taking a hot shower or bath, having a hot cup of tea, sitting in silence, taking a nap, putting on a special lotion, making a special item for dinner, caressing your arms, petting a pet, etc.

5. Meet yourself where you are

- It's natural to be afraid of a virus that you can't control or predict. It's okay to be frightened. It's important to normalize those feelings and realize you aren't alone in your fears. Be gentle on yourself.

Most of all, it's important to remember that emotions and reactions are a natural part of the human experience to have around an event like this. But it is equally important to recognize that you are in control of how you reframe your experience and choose to respond.

These resiliency building mindfulness practices will help limit anxiety, trauma development and grief during this once in a lifetime event.