

Keeping coronavirus anxiety at bay

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Staying calm during the coronavirus pandemic isn't easy, but a few simple steps will help you stay informed yet relaxed.

Keep up-to-date with reliable sources.

"Given the onslaught of media coverage and information, it's important to make sure you are getting updates from reputable sources," said Nathaniel Van Kirk, coordinator of inpatient group therapy at McLean Hospital in Belmont, Mass.

Good sources include the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress.

"Using these guidelines as a foundation, while acknowledging that you won't be able to get 100% certainty in an evolving situation, may help you continue to live your [daily life](#)," he said in a hospital news release. "It can help you keep your entire day from being consumed by [anxiety](#) or worry and instead let you focus on what you can control."

Limit your exposure to media, including [social media](#), which has a lot of misinformation, and skip watching the news right before bedtime, experts advise.

Try to stay calm.

Kathryn Boger, program director of the McLean Anxiety Mastery Program, said being aware of two common thinking traps can help you avoid falling into them. One is catastrophizing, where you imagine the [worst-case scenario](#), and the other is overgeneralizing, where you think the worst is much more likely to happen.

"We can ask ourselves, 'Is this thought based in fact, and is it helpful to me right now?'" Boger said.

Create a plan for you and your family.

Keep a list that includes food supplies and medications, as well as doctor and work contacts. Keep items on your list stocked and your contacts up-to-date. Planning with your family can help ease anxiety.

Also, think about how you can help others. In a crisis, maintaining connection with the community is vital.

Communicate with your kids.

Even if your kids aren't talking about it, start the conversation. Not talking with them about something frightening can increase feelings of fear and uncertainty, Boger said.

"Research tells us that when we name an emotion, it decreases the intensity of the emotion. Open the space for kids to say, 'I'm scared,' and validate their feelings. This can help to take the edge off their fear," she suggested.

With kids who have anxiety or [obsessive-compulsive disorder](#) (OCD), let them know they are likely to hear a lot of misinformation. They may also

hear things that upset them, like people joking that they are "being OCD" about hand-washing.

"We can help them think about how they can mentally protect themselves in these moments," Boger said.

Keep it simple.

Sleep, nutritious eating, good hygiene, exercise, fresh air and connecting with people are the basics.

Mindfulness and breathing exercises can help manage anxiety.

"Maintaining daily structure and connection with hobbies can help with balance during an uncertain time," Boger said.

Van Kirk added: "Maintaining balance in daily life and not letting your day be consumed by the 'next headline,' is important to maintain perspective in the uncertainty of daily life."

More information: To learn more about coping with anxiety, visit the [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#).

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