



National Sheriffs' Association Psychological Services Board

How to Cope with Anxiety During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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These are unprecedented times of intense vulnerability with restrictions of daily life. It is normal to feel anxious and uncertain about the future. In order to cope with stress and feelings of powerlessness during these times, it is helpful to focus on what you can control. When you have a task at hand, it helps to interrupt negative thought rumination. We have all heard the term, "Idle hands, devil's workshop." Staying busy can help to give your body a break from the adrenaline that is produced from fear and negative thinking. This could be a good time to organize your finances, make a budget, and analyze your spending. You can try to distract yourself by organizing your home or organizing the hundreds of pictures in your cell phone. Rely on or re-connect with your faith. You can also try meditating. The research on spirituality and meditation has revealed tremendous mental health benefits.

In times of crisis, we also learn that what is important to humanity is connection. Being connected now is more important than ever. Fortunately, in our world today we are flooded with technological ways to remain in contact with one another. During this pandemic, we have heard stories of people helping the most vulnerable to shop and run errands. We have seen grocery stores open one hour early to ease the stress and reduce the exposure of illness to their older customers. We have seen how people have rallied their neighbors to buy gift certificates from their small local businesses in order to front them money while times are uncertain. The spirit of kindness always seems to emerge in times of darkness. Allow this to inspire you. This is a good time to help others, to connect with your loved ones, and to re-connect with old friends. If you remember any terrible thing you have survived in the past, you will likely remember that it was the love and support of other people who helped you through it. Now is a great time to give back to others who have helped you, or to pay it forward.

Although it is human nature, resist the urge to panic and focus on the negative aspect of things. Breathe and move your body. Exercise is crucial during this time, because it keeps your immune system strong, and helps to manage stress. Avoid alcohol. It is a depressant, and it will only make you feel worse in the long run. It is also possible to seek peer support and psychiatric, or psychological services, as many counselors and doctors are now practicing via teleconferencing.

Remember that tough times help us to develop grit. As with any traumatic experience there is growth. You may find that you will have more empathy, compassion, or humility from experiencing such vulnerability. Perhaps you will learn better financial practices, have stronger family connections, and see the goodness of humanity. As with any traumatic event, we are reminded of our resilience, the kindness of others, the power of community, and a realization that we will come through it stronger and better than before.
