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FEELING STRESSED ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)?

MANAGING ANXIETY IN AN ANXIETY-PROVOKING SITUATION

The outbreak of COVID-19 around the world has led to the spread of fear and panic for individuals and communities. In addition to following physical precautions guidelines, individuals should be taking care of their psychological well-being.

Reduce anxiety by reducing risk. Ways to reduce risk include practicing good hygiene (e.g. sneezing and coughing into your elbow, sneezing into a tissue and immediately throwing the tissue away, wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, etc.) In addition, create a plan in case your regular routine is disrupted, such as setting up remote work and alternative childcare arrangements. Setting out a plan can help reduce anxiety by taking charge of the things you can control

Manage your information flow by choosing reliable sources and establish boundaries on checking for updates. Getting regular, factual information is important. However, continuously scrolling through social media or constantly refreshing the news is likely to lead to increased anxiety. Pick a few trusted news outlets – such as the state and local health authorities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or World Health Organization – and commit to checking once or twice a day for updates.

Monitor your anxiety levels. Anxiety is a normal response to a stressful situation and can provide adaptive benefits in many situations. However, when faced with mounting uncertainty, your brain can go into an anxiety spiral that is no longer helpful. Knowing the difference between typical and atypical stress is important. Monitoring your stress level will let you know when you need to seek additional help. ✓ **A typical stress reaction may include:** temporary difficulty concentrating; irritability and anger; fatigue; stomachache; and, difficulty sleeping. ✓ **An atypical stress reaction may include:** a persistent and/or excessive worry that doesn't lift and keeps you from carrying out your daily tasks. If you experience significant changes in your energy level, eating patterns, or sleeping patterns, difficulty concentrating on normal tasks, prolonged and overwhelming worry and hopelessness, or thoughts of self-injury or suicide, seek out immediate help at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text Got5 to 741741.

Practice good self-care, including exercise, eating healthy foods, and sleeping an adequate amount at night. If possible, spend some time outside. Avoid staying up late to monitor the news

Virtually reach out to different types of support networks, such as family, friends, colleagues, faith-based communities, and social organizations to strengthen your overall feeling of connection. Isolation and loneliness feeds anxiety.

Find meaningful tasks and roles within your support network to channel your anxiety, such as coordinating deliveries of groceries to those unable to leave home, curating kids' activity ideas for parents working from home, or video calling or calling those who might feel socially isolated. Supporting others is beneficial to the supporter as well.

Find or create spaces that are not focused on COVID-19. Start a social media thread about other topics, ask friends to discuss other topics, or watch your favorite TV or movie.

Savor small positive moments, amplify positive stories, and stay optimistic. Try to cultivate a mental wellness practice, such as writing in a gratitude journal, or talking nightly with your family about moments during the day that were fun or enjoyable.

Take an opportunity to practice mindfulness when managing anxiety. Mindfulness tools like grounding exercises, sensory modulation, and deep breathing may be helpful