

## May 2020 E-Newsletter: Self-care During Stressful Situations

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In light of our current pandemic, a lot of Americans are experiencing an elevated level of anxiety. The anxiety can stem from fear of contracting COVID-19, financial changes/hardships or the general loss of control many have experienced during these trying times. Anxiety can lead to many other health issues such as depression, substance abuse disorders, and digestive issues, not to mention the mental angst the anxiety itself usually causes. During any high-stress time it is of the utmost importance to take time to take care of yourself and to genuinely focus on your well-being. We are going to review some simple yet effective ways to manage anxiety and endure difficult times while remaining mentally healthy.

Continuing to have structure and maintaining a daily routine have been proven to reduce anxiety. If you are working from home or helping your children with school assignments, try to set a daily schedule with similar time frames. This includes setting a daily alarm and having a planned daily schedule. Going to bed at the same time each day and getting enough sleep helps tremendously with one's mental health as well. Also, having a structured day helps to make one feel more in control of everything and can aid in coping with change.



Another shown reducer of anxiety is staying busy doing what you love. Participating in your favorite hobby releases dopamine or the “feel good” neurotransmitter of the brain. So, pull out that painting you have been wanting to finish or plant that garden you’ve been wanting to plant for years. A lot of people are experiencing more free time right now and that has given many a great opportunity to complete projects or pick back up hobbies that our busy lives haven’t included in the past. Not to mention staying busy is a great mental distraction and overall decreases anxiety.

During these times of self-distancing and isolating at home, it is incredibly important to maintain human connections. We are very blessed to live in such an advance technological world where the ability to make video calls is at our fingertips. Plan time into your day to reach out to your family/friends through a simple phone call or video call. You could even plan a video conference call with several of your friends or family members. Maintaining relationships and preventing feelings of isolation and loneliness are vital. Sending emails, texting, and talking to your neighbors from a safe distance are more examples of easy ways to stay connected with others.



Finally, recognizing feelings of anxiety and being able to express those feelings will help decrease them. If you are worried that you are experiencing an increase in anxiety or your anxiety level is beginning to affect your daily life, reach out and get the help you need. Controlling anxiety early can prevent the escalation of your symptoms and prevent some of the physical effects of anxiety. Talk to spouse, friend or trusted family member. If you feel that is not enough, reach out to your care provider for help. Taking care of your mental health is challenging during any crisis but is worth the effort. Including the above measures will help you arrive at the end of the crisis mentally healthy and able to transition back into some sense of normality easier.

Stay safe and most importantly, take care of yourself!

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