

How to Cope with Anxiety and Uncertainty



No matter our circumstances, uncertainty is a part of our lives. When society faces upheaval and our sense of security wanes, how do we stop it from controlling us or creating a sense of panic?

No matter how big or small stressors may seem, they should not be ignored or treated as a source of shame. If you are someone who has dealt with anxiety before the pandemic, or someone who is experiencing it for the first time, the tools below can assist you in coping and managing your anxiety. Learning how to uplift yourself and others may be a process, so this is an opportune time to educate yourself and others.

Tips

There are many ways to cope positively with uncertainty, and it's important to learn what works best for you. Checking in with yourself, finding creative ways to cope, and maintaining all forms of your health are just some of the ways in which you can manage your anxiety.

Manage Your Stressors

- **Find joy.** Worrying won't stop the bad stuff from happening; it just stops you from enjoying the good things around you. Find ways to distract from your anxieties and find joy throughout your day; laughing can sometimes be the best cure.
- **Stay active.** Quarantining can lead to stagnancy, so creating structure in your new schedule can help you feel motivated and active. Make time for exercise and new hobbies to fill moments in your day.
- **Address your stressors through the channels available to you.** If you are anxious about contracting or spreading COVID-19, performing simple tasks like washing your hands or follow social distancing procedures can be a productive way of addressing your concerns.
- **Allow yourself to relax.** To be on the top of your game and the most productive, you also need moments of rest. Take the time that you need to prevent yourself from burning out.
- **Explore the world around you.** While following strict social distancing, take the time you can to, stretch your legs, go outside, and have a change of scene. You can also open a window for some fresh air and see the world.
- **Champion your health.** The key to a healthy mind can be as simple as being physically healthy. Challenge yourself to get enough sleep and nutrients, and ensure you stay enriched throughout your day.
- **Limit your media use.** Too much inundation of every case and aspect of coronavirus will go beyond informing you and exacerbate your stress.

- **Listen to your body.** Anxiety and depression can manifest in physical ways and recognizing how and when they affect you can help manage and reduce their effects.
- **Turn to experts, whether it be the health department or therapists.** You don't have to make all decisions on your own; getting professional advice can often be the most helpful.

Support Yourself and Others

- **Acknowledge differences.** If you are living with others, understand everyone's ways of coping may be different. Find moments to support them, but also recognize when they need space.
- **Stay connected.** Reach out to others even if you can't see them in person. Pick up the phone, create a group chat, or join online group classes/discussions.
- **Help your community.** Helping others is also a great way to stay motivated and cope with our anxiety. Check in with neighbors, the elderly, anyone around you, including your pets. Even children can benefit from taking care of others, so have them help take care of pets or even their stuffed animals.
- **Acknowledge that outside help can be needed.** If you or someone you know is dealing with isolation because of anxiety, or is excessively washing their hands to the point that they cannot function, realize it is time to contact a therapist if you haven't already. Many therapists are providing remote sessions via telecommunication.
- **Discover your support network.** Like everyone else, don't be afraid to reach out. You can use technology to contact professionals or family or friends, and find the help you need.
- **Be kind.** It's important to realize this pandemic will not last forever. Treat yourself and others well by taking care of each other. Kindness will help you now, as well as in the future when you look back on these challenging times.
- **Create structure for children in your care.** For children having structure is especially important. If they are older you can give them schedules and assignments to do on their own. If they are younger take moments away from your work to interact directly with your child and release built up energy with them. Balancing work and child care can be difficult so figure out what works best for you and be forgiving with yourself and your children.
- **Structure does not have to be "work".** Be creative and interactive with yourself (and with children!) during these times. Fulfilling behavior does not have to be consumable or commodified. Baking, dancing, relaxing with a movie, making a fort, and playing games can all be stress relieving and productive.

Resources

- **Verywell Mind** ([verywellmind.com](https://www.verywellmind.com)) is an online resource with relaxation techniques and other resources that can be helpful during times of uncertainty.
- **Zoom** (zoom.us) provides free 40-minute teleconferences so you can connect to your loved ones remotely.
- **The Jewish Board's Coping Techniques Primer** ([jewishboard.org/resources/coping-with-uncertainty/](https://www.jewishboard.org/resources/coping-with-uncertainty/)) provides details on four coping techniques and additional tips on how to relax during times of uncertainty.
- **NYC Well** ([nyc.gov/nycwell](https://www.nyc.gov/nycwell)) is a confidential hotline that you can use for mental health support. Along with online chat, you can call 1.888.NYC.WELL or text WELL to 65173.