

Dealing with anxiety during a time of crisis

Not since 9/11 have we, as a nation, had to face a crisis like this; an event that each of us, regardless of age, race, income, or where we live, are having to adjust to. Daily we are being exposed to news of schools and businesses closing, sports teams suspending their seasons, and large scale events being cancelled in an effort to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. These are anxious times.

By definition, anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease; typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. We are in uncharted territory as our community, our country, and the rest of the world works to deal with this public health emergency.

It is important realize that feelings of anxiety are normal at this moment. What we need to do is recognize when we are feeling anxious and employ coping tools. For adults symptoms of anxiety can include preoccupation with worrying thoughts, heart palpitations, mood swings, and feeling like being in a fog. For young children they may show anxiety by being more clingy and having difficulty falling asleep or having nightmares.

There are things you can do:

1. **Maintain a good sleep routine:** For adults and children it is important to get at least 8 hours of sleep. Maintain a regular sleep schedule by trying to get to bed around the same time and waking up at the same time even if you don't have to go to work or school.
2. **Keep moving.** Spend time exercising. Go for walks or bike rides. You can also do some mind and body exercises at home such as yoga or workouts. With your kids, make some time to play some music and dance. There are apps and videos on line that can help guide you. It will be important to keep active.
3. **Talk to others.** It is important to stay connected with family and friends and avoid social isolation. Talk to others by phone, or through Face-time. Check in with loved ones and neighbors.
4. **Do things as a family.** It can be easy to isolate in the same house with video games and TV. Make time for family game nights or make dinner together.
5. **If you are feeling stressed about all the news, unplug from social media.** If you feel the need to keep up with what is happening, set aside a specific time in the day that you will check the news.

When fear and anxiety go unchecked, it takes a toll on our well being. If you notice that it is impacting you; you may want to consider talking to a mental health professional.

These are trying times, but as a community, we can get through this together.