

MANAGING ANXIETY


Coronavirus Fears & Concerns

Presented by Cigna
Employee Assistance Program


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SEMINAR GOALS



- Explore unique aspects and impact of the coronavirus disease
- Learn about recommended responses
- Review normal reactions and strategies for coping with anxiety

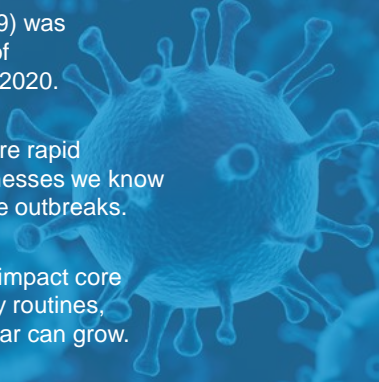


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LIVING WITH A GROWING SENSE OF THREAT

- Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was declared a public health emergency of international concern on January 30, 2020.
- The spread of the disease seems more rapid and widespread than the common illnesses we know or even some other infectious disease outbreaks.
- As we learn more about how it could impact core areas of our lives – health, work, daily routines, finances, loved ones – anxiety and fear can grow.



(World Health Organization (WHO), 2020a; WHO, 2020b; Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP), 2020)
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...AND GROWING WORRY



Unique factors impact anxiety

- Threat is unseen and unpredictable
- We can't exclude ourselves from risk
- This is uncharted territory
- Alarming, 24/7 news cycle

We can't change these factors, but we can stay informed and work to manage the anxiety they create.

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UNDERSTAND YOUR REACTIONS

- Worry, anxiety, panic
- Feeling helpless
- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble sleeping
- Feelings of frustration, anger
- Sense of grief and loss
- Hyper-vigilance



We are hard-wired to react to a sense of threat with a fight/flight/freeze response.

(Berkeley University Health Services, n.d.; Cherry, 2019)

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RESPONSE: START WITH FACTS



- › **What it is**
- › **Symptoms**
- › **Transmission**
- › **Treatment**
- › **Outcomes**

What do we know?

- Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that are known to cause a range of illnesses, including colds.
- COVID-19 symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- It appears to spread mainly via droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- There's no anti-viral treatment or vaccine at this time. Care involves helping to relieve symptoms.
- Current information indicates that many cases are mild, but the sick and elderly can be hit harder.

(World Health Organization (WHO), 2020b; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC), 2020; Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP), 2020)

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RECOMMENDATION: PREPARE, DON'T PANIC

- Practice healthy hygiene precautions
- Practice social distancing; avoid close contact with sick people
- Talk to your manager or HR about company's directives and policies
- Have a preparedness plan for a potential quarantine
- Talk about plans with family members
- Follow updates from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), your state/local public health officials



Healthy Hygiene

- › Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- › Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- › Cough or sneeze into your elbow or cover with a tissue, then throw it in the trash.
- › Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces.

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC), 2020; WebMD, 2020)

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MANAGING THOUGHTS: CONSIDER REALITIES



- Put your risk in perspective
- Put this disease in context
- Watch out for flawed assumptions
- Remind yourself of the emotional cost of "worst case scenario" thinking

Panic can grow when we focus on the threat and underestimate our ability to cope with it.



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MANAGING THOUGHTS: LOOK FOR BALANCE



- Move thoughts to the present
- Focus on what you can control
- Use reminder mantras
- Take a break – change the channel

Strive to be always aware, not always fearful. It's harder to address true risk when everything seems like a danger.



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IF THOUGHTS BECOME OVERWHELMING



- Try a thought-stopping technique
- Use your senses to switch focus
- Offer yourself kind comfort
- Consider professional support

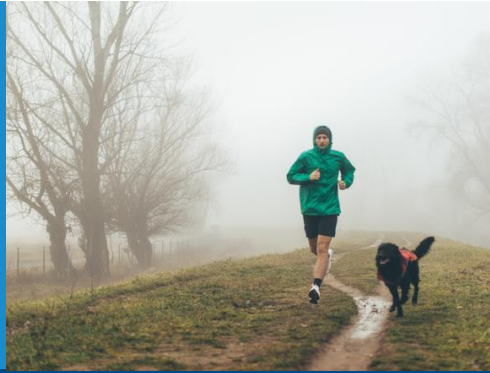


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MANAGING FEELINGS

- Allow and name feelings
- Feelings of grief, loss are normal
- Find your soothers
- Offer support to others
- Have realistic expectations



Notice what brings a sense of calm. Perhaps it's meditation, listening to music, journaling, running, being in nature, calling a friend... what works for you?



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USE MIND/BODY CONNECTION



- **Slow, deep breathing** sends calming signals to the brain via vagus nerve
- **Progressive relaxation** releases muscle tension
- **Mental visualization** cues body to respond to imagined calm as if it were real



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MOVES YOU CAN MAKE



- Stick to normal routines
- Limit news exposure
- Prioritize self-care
- Connect with others



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REMEMBER YOUR OWN RESILIENCE

- Think about how you've navigated life challenges in the past
- Be prepared
- Stay informed
- Manage anxious thoughts and feelings
- Reach out for help when you need it



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