

Managing Anxiety During Times of Stress

As the coronavirus spreads, more and more people are becoming anxious about what this means in their life. With the news of people becoming sick and dying, people being quarantined, travel restrictions, and businesses and stores closing down, all of this might be too much for some people to digest without becoming depressed. We need to understand it is perfectly “normal” to feel anxiety about this emerging health crisis. How each of us reacts depends on our background, the things that make us different from other people and the community we live in.

Some people who may react more strongly to the stress of a crisis such as the coronavirus may be Older people and people with chronic diseases who are higher risk for COVID-19, children and teens, frontline people such as doctors, healthcare providers or first responders and people who have mental health conditions

Some of the symptoms people may experience during an infectious outbreak since as the coronavirus, include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

So you may ask, what can I do to take care myself, my family, or friends to cope with the stress of our current situation? Here are some recommendations to help you cope with the anxiety, and fear surrounding the coronavirus pandemic:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, listening to the news. This includes social media which may not always be the most accurate information. Listening to the news continuously increases your anxiety! Disconnect for a while!
- Try to keep things in perspective. Find out the facts! Two reliable resources you can refer to for the facts, and not unsubstantiated opinions include:
 - Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - World Health Organization (WHO)
- Take precautions for the safety of your and your families’ health:
 - Wash your hands *often* with soap and water. If not available, use hand sanitizer
 - Follow the guidelines from our health officials, the government, and our healthcare providers.
 - If you or a family member is sick, *stay home so as to provide spread of the virus.*
- Take care of your body! Take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, reflect and pray!
- Explore new prayers and prayer practices.
- Refer to the St. Therese of Lisieux website for updates from our parish, our pastor Monsignor Kasza, podcasts, spiritual materials and prayers, articles, and references for our parishioners’ use.
- Try to eat healthy -well balanced meals and not eat junk food! It is really easy to snack throughout the day when you are in the house all day.

- Exercise regularly. Use the treadmill, put on an exercise video, go outside! The weather is starting to be nice outside. Go for a walk, take out the bike from storage and ride it.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Do a hobby that you like to do or try something new! Great time to do something you never had time to do.
- Even though we are being asked to stay home, keep connected with your family and friends. This is a time when people will be prone to loneliness. Face-time your family and grandkids! Pick up the phone and call someone, especially someone who does not have a lot of family or friends. If our elderly, homebound and sick don't have the food or medications they need, try to help them secure them. There are resources available in the community that they might be able to reach out to. Many food chains and pharmacies, now deliver to homes.
- Think about what type of coping skills you have used in the past to help with difficult situations. We have all had difficult situations in the past and have been able to get through them. Maybe it is praying. This is a good time start a new prayer ritual in the home, or if you find comfort in your present prayer practices, use those. Maybe reaching out to a trusted friend or family member to help you talk out your anxiety. Maybe it is engaging in some mindfulness or meditation techniques. Whatever works to help relieve stress and reduce your anxiety, do it.
- If you are already struggling with a mental health condition or anxiety, reach out to your healthcare provider, counsellor, or advisor for recommendations. If you are on medications, continue to take your medications as prescribed.

Remember, outbreaks such as the coronavirus and other crisis situations do occur from time to time throughout the world. While they can be very scary, especially if the situation is directly affecting the community or country where you live, try and keep calm, take preventative precautions to protect your health, follow the guidelines and recommendations of official governmental health agencies and take care of your physical, emotional and spiritual self.