

## Anxiety During the COVID-19 Pandemic Health Crisis

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Are you overwhelmed by the frightening and rapidly evolving news about the Novel Coronavirus COVID-19? You are not alone! Many people are feeling alone. The pandemic health crisis has us feeling isolated and longing for connection with community, family and friends. Lost without our routines and our usual contacts and connections, troubling feelings of anxiety and despair are overtaking many people. The New Jersey Psychological Association is here for you with support, resources, and knowledge that will help you survive this public health emergency.

Here are some tips that will help you get through the challenges you are facing.

- **Start with structure.** Structure your days with activities, set goals, and establish a routine that keeps you busy.
- **Stay healthy.** Make staying healthy your focus by eating clean, hydrating well, getting on a good sleep schedule, and taking good care of yourself.
- **Keep active.** Make time for outdoor exercise. Taking walks is an ideal way to combine exercise with experiencing the great outdoors.
- **Be kind.** Spending lots of time at home can become nerve wracking. An extra measure of kindness to others will feel good for all of you. Be more positive than negative, more helpful than critical, and more compassionate than complaining.
- **Stay positive.** Focusing on what's wrong, what's frightening, or who's at fault leaves us feeling helpless and discouraged. Search for things to look forward to once the crisis ends, or taking time to recall favorite memories, will lead to more positive emotions.
- **Connect, connect.** Take advantage of social media by video chatting with friends for those lunches you were supposed to have, or other get togethers.
- **Set limits.** Place limits on following the news, time watching endless videos, or staying up late as overdoing things may not be helpful. In particular, too much exposure can be emotionally draining, increase stress and anxiety, and disrupt sleep, mood, and concentration.
- **Control the Controllables.** Spend time focusing on things over which you have control, and avoid thinking about things that are not in your control. This will be very empowering.
- **Special Tips for Parents:**
  - **Talk to your children.** They need to know you are listening to them and that you are there to support them.
  - **Keep regular routines.** Children thrive with routines and become restless and anxious when their routines are disrupted.

- **Model good coping skills.** Your ability to cope with distress and uncertainty will help them cope as well.

So how do you know if you need help coping with these tense, uncertain times? Are you....

- Stressed to the breaking point?
- Feeling hopeless, that things won't get better?
- Thinking things are only getting worse?
- Having the growing desire to run away or to escape?
- Noticing stress disrupting everyday life?
- Feeling things are spiraling out of control?
- Having difficulty concentrating, and stopping yourself from thinking about what's happening?

NJPA has resources at [www.psychologynj.org](http://www.psychologynj.org) that can help you get more facts, find informative resources, and also obtain referrals if you would like to talk to a psychologist. NJPA is about to launch its annual campaign promoting mental health awareness, as May is Mental Health Awareness Month. In fact, this year, NJPA is recognizing the value of making connections within our local communities in the campaign NJPA calls Compassionate Communities under the hashtag **#whatyoucando**.

Here are some additional helpful resources:

### **10 Ways to Ease Your Coronavirus Anxiety**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/smarter-living/coronavirus-anxiety-tips.html>

### **Manage Anxiety & Stress**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

### **Coping with Coronavirus Anxiety**

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/coping-with-coronavirus-anxiety-2020031219183>

### **Parents, you are the filter through which your kids see this crisis. How you talk about it matters**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/03/24/talking-kids-coronavirus/>