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How To Cope With The COVID-19 Crisis: 5 Ways To Shift Your Mindset

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In Improving My Mental Health

Since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 (coronavirus) a global pandemic, many of us are facing unknowns and experiencing changes in everyday life.

An outbreak like this triggers a response from us that not only demands energy and creates stress but can also lead to physical and emotional problems. It's essential to recognize that mental health is a part of our response, so developing strategies that reduce stress while building resilience skills are important for maintaining our mental well-being.



We may not be able to control what happens with COVID-19 in the coming weeks and months, but we can control how we respond to it. With social distancing, school closures and event cancellations, many people have experienced negative emotional stress states leading to feelings of powerlessness, fear, and panic. Learn to adjust your attitude and adopt a mindset that helps you manage through times of change with a greater sense of control over your responses and helps keep your anxiety at bay.



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Fear and anxiety are part of a normal response to COVID-19. Humans are hard-wired to feel fear; it keeps us safe and helps us take the necessary actions to ensure our survival. Sometimes fear can lead us to take actions that don't benefit ourselves or others and ignite a sense of panic.

People are currently struggling to find the right balance between having a calm pragmatic approach versus a knee-jerk panic response. We're witnessing people rush to the stores and feel fear at the sight of empty shelves with a lack of essential supplies. Recognizing your COVID-19 stress is information you can use to regain control while still taking necessary precautions.

5 ways a shift in your mindset can help you cope with COVID-19

1) Step back and look at the bigger picture

Taking a limited view of the events unfolding around you can elicit a strong reaction and trigger your fight/flight response. Your thoughts can easily turn to anxiety-inducing "what if" statements. The danger of the first "what if" statement is that it's often not true, yet it has the power to set off a chain reaction of negative thoughts that lead you into a downward spiral.

For example, you may start thinking, *what if COVID-19 has a permanent effect on the economy?* Next, you may ask *what if businesses are affected?* This might lead you to ask *what if I lose my job?* Followed by, *what if I lose my house?*

It's essential to gain control of those "what if" statements since they are typically negative and can often lead to a state of hysteria. Avoid "what if" statements, take a step back to look at the bigger picture and focus on what you can proactively do in the present moment.

2) Focus on what you *can* control

In the absence of control, people will often try to create a rationale or fear to make it feel like they possess a sense of control – this inevitably leads us astray. We live in a world with international travel at the forefront. There is no one person or one group of people to blame for the outbreak.

When things feel uncertain, it can be difficult to focus on the control that we do have. Information & facts will help you take precautions that can give you back a sense of power. Another area that we have control over is how we consume information about the outbreak. The [World Health Organization](#) has great



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MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN EMERGENCY SETTINGS, summarising key mental health and psychosocial support considerations for the COVID-19 outbreak.

3) The mindset that minimizes fear

Strive to establish a mindset that knows the difference between your fears and worries and the real facts. Remember that even if we're frightened that something bad could happen, our thoughts do not make it true. It's okay to have concerns that this crisis may impact the way you live over the next few months, but it's detrimental to live through the period with your worst fears. Compare and challenge your fears when emotions rise.

4) Have a flexible game plan

Seek out the familiar things that have not changed in your life as a way to anchor you in turbulent times. Aim to maintain your regular routines and activities where possible. And, try to adopt a flexible approach that allows you to shift your plan daily as needed. It's about being flexible in a factual and realistic frame as opposed to looking at the world in a fearful way.

5) Practice self-compassion with the help of happiness habits.

During times of crisis, it's easy to be distracted by fear and neglect self-care. The reality is that during periods of uncertainty, it becomes even more critical to balance your anxiety with good nutrition, sleep and exercise and find ways to relax by embracing your happiness habits. If you feel like spending an afternoon watching Netflix, pick a comedy to elevate your mood with humour that releases the positive neurotransmitter dopamine. Stay connected to others and overcome social distancing measures by reaching out to friends and family members via a video telecommunications app. If you require professional support, consider connecting with a mental health professional, using a digital mental health platform.

An opportunity to make positive changes and build resilience

It may not feel like it at the time, but with every major change and crisis, we have a chance to develop new coping strategies and build our resilience. By shifting our mindset, we can learn to navigate fears, manage life's threats more effectively and achieve positive mental well-being.