

Coping with Coronavirus: Managing Stress, Fear, and Anxiety

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These are confusing, stressful times for all of us. As the coronavirus pandemic affects numerous facets of our society, it also impacts each person in different ways. The disruptions to daily life are already being felt by many, my family included—my son has been sent home from college, my place of worship has closed, and the comforting social gatherings that usually fill my weekends are off-limits. We are all feeling uncertain about what could happen in the coming weeks, as we hope to slow the spread of this pandemic. Feelings of anxiety and uncertainty are completely normal during times like this.

Now imagine you are facing this uncertainty and have a mental illness. How much more challenging must it be to navigate this uncertainty? While we all are concerned about the future, for those with anxiety disorders, worry may be all-consuming. For those with schizophrenia, the concern that people are infectious may contribute to paranoia. And for those with depression, lack of social engagement and disruption in routines could increase symptoms.

If you need support coping with the events of the last few weeks, there is advice and help available. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a webpage with information on dealing with fear, anxiety, and stress brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. A section of this CDC page is specifically geared toward those of us with children, as they can be particularly sensitive to uncertainty. For additional shareable resources for those with children, see this NPR story, which features an interview with National Institute of Mental Health expert Dr. Krystal Lewis.

For those with mental illnesses, be sure to continue your treatment regimens. Consider developing a plan for telehealth sessions with your provider if you (or your provider) are quarantined or must avoid exposures to the public for any reason. And, reach out to friends and family for support, virtually if necessary.

This last piece of advice is really important for all of us. It is important to realize that social distancing does not have to mean social isolation, especially with modern technologies available to many of us. Connecting with our friends and loved ones, whether by high tech means or through simple phone calls, can help us maintain ties during stressful days ahead and will give us strength to weather this difficult passage.

Resources:

[**Manage Anxiety & Stress \(CDC\)**](#)

[**Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus \(NPR\)**](#)