

Virus Anxiety, Boredom and Social Isolation: Create a Coping Toolkit

Information, Skills, Ideas for Connection and Resources to help You Ride Out the COVID 19 Storm

What Makes COVID 19 So Stressful?

The pandemic of Influenza in 1918 was horrifying and lethal taking nearly 50 million lives in a period of 9 months. COVID 19 is much better controlled due to rapid communication, social distancing, good hygiene and preparation. So, why is it so stressful?

1. Overwhelming 24/7 news coverage
2. Social support is strictly limited
3. Feeling a lack of control over the situation produces fear and helplessness
4. Obsessive thinking about cleanliness may become more prominent
5. For students who cannot go home or have family in hotspots around the globe, worry about loved ones can also produce sadness and depressed mood.

Manage the Uncontrollable By Controlling What You Can

While we have limited control over the spread of the virus, we can limit our exposure.

But, how can we manage the anxiety created by uncertainty, misinformation and isolation?

1. Limit Social Media Exposure to avoid constant overflow of virus information
2. Remind yourself of a difficult time that you have successfully managed in the past. Be resilient by looking 5 years ahead to imagine
3. Begin to think of what can I control **Right Now**. Avoid What if scenarios.
4. Try something new. Free APPS and websites promote mindfulness, stress management, and explore grief. Examples:
 - a. Headspace
 - b. Shine
 - c. Calm
 - d. www.virusanxiety.com has a number of resources
 - e. www.grief.com has information in dealing with loss

Behavioral Activation: Getting Unstuck

- **Choose a favorite activity**—playing music, art, crocheting, playing video games, binge watching
- Get into **the flow** of enjoyment or use as simple distraction. **Get your mind off of this situation.**
- **Engage in a Cultural Activity**—visit a museum online, read a classic, create something new
- **Social Distancing is Not Social Isolation**—take a walk in nature, bird watch
- **Challenge Yourself**—eat healthy, Try a new Recipe or mix up an old one
- **Meet Friends**—In person in small groups, use social distancing to take a walk or enjoy a coffee.
 - **Meet on Zoom, Snapchat, play games on the internet, speak by phone**
- **Use CAPS, Protocol**—remote services are available to students

New Normal—This situation is both uncertain and temporary. Be grateful for small things. Focus on facts and give space to your emotions, do something meaningful or valuable to you. Remember that we have what it takes to get through this time **Together**.