

## **Covid-19 and Stress** *(can use for multiple tutoring sessions)*

Adapted from the Kalamazoo Literacy Council Health Literacy Work Group

### **Vocabulary:**

**Stress:** What we feel in our body when we fear losing something we care about. Our heart beats faster. We have sweaty palms and stomach aches.

**Concentrating:** Directing your mind toward one thing.

**Worsening:** becoming worse (bad gets worse)

**Chronic health problems:** Health problems that don't go away

**Mental health conditions:** Problems that people have with their thinking, emotions, behaviors or relationships.

### **The Stress of the CoVid-19 outbreak can include:**

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



### What can you do to feel better?

- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including social media. Too much is upsetting.
- **Take care of your body.**
  - Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate
  - Eat healthy meals
  - Exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep
  - Avoid alcohol and drugs
- **Do fun things with family and friends**
- **Talk with people you trust about your worries and how you are feeling.**

There is a free workbook you can use to help with stress:

<https://thewellnesssociety.org/free-coronavirus-anxiety-workbook/>

Here are some vocabulary words and terms from it:

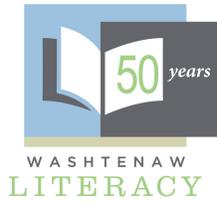
**Chronic stress:** Feeling stress for a long period of time. This can hurt your body (chest tightness, trouble sleeping, muscle tightness)

**Anxiety:** Unhelpful negative thinking when we don't know what will happen or we fear losing something we care about.

**Resilience:** being able to get through tough times with few problems

**Gratitude** the state of being thankful

**Distraction:** Something that takes your focus away from something else

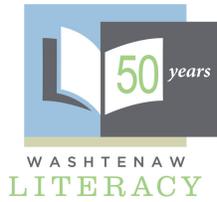


- Change your “Information Diet”
- Make a gratitude journal
- Focus on What you Can control
- Question your thinking
- Distract Yourself from your thoughts
- Be Kind to Yourself
- Do fun things with family and friends
- Take care of your health
- Talk to people you trust

### **Changing your information “diet”**

Most Americans listen or watch information about CoVid-19 more than 2 times a day. This can make you more worried and anxious.

- find a good source for CoVid-19 news (like the CDC and WHO) and check it only once a day
- find some “good” news. (Here is one “good news” website <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/> with many stories about people helping others).
- remind yourself that most people who get CoVid-19 have mild symptoms and most of those who do get it get better.



### **Make a gratitude journal**

Write down one thing you are grateful for every day.

This can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Make you happier
- Make you healthier, better able to fight off illness
- Improve sleep

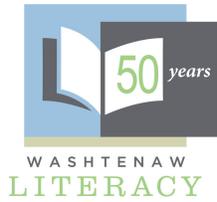
### **Focus on what you can control**

What are some things you can't control?

What I eat --The news—What the governor does---aging—my information diet---how I exercise—the weather—traffic—other people's decisions—if I smoke—If I look for good news

### **Question Your Thinking: The THINK Technique**

- **True?** 100% true, what is fact and what is not
- **Helpful?** Is paying attention to this thought useful to me or others?
- **Inspire?** Does it inspire me or hold me back?
- **Necessary?** Is it important for me to focus on this thought?
- **Kind?** Is the thought kind? If not, what would be a kinder thought?



Frank is afraid that he will never get a job and the family will be homeless. How can he use the T-H-I-N-K model to question his thinking? Pick one of the questions. How would this help Frank?

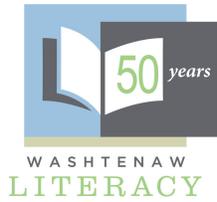
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### **Distract yourself from negative thoughts**

Find something to do (preferably with other people) that uses your mind.

- Play games: virtual or board games
- Learn something new
- Make something for someone you love
- Make a “Now that I have more time, I get to...” list
- Prepare for a 5 K race

### **Be kind to yourself**



Covid-19 has changed our world, left us wondering what is going to happen, and can be dangerous.

**It is normal to be anxious and overwhelmed**

**Practice deep breathing, meditation or prayer**

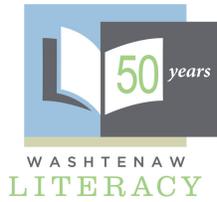
- Breathe slowly from your belly for one minute
- Practice meditation
- Practice prayer if that is part of your beliefs

**Have Fun with Family and Friends**

- Set up a family game night
- Cook with the people in your house
- “Zoom” friends you haven’t seen in a long time
- Challenge each other to exercise, or stop smoking, or lose weight
- Just sit down and talk

**Build Your Health**

- Eat Healthy Foods
- Get Plenty of Sleep
- Exercise Often
- Avoid alcohol and drugs



COVID Materials, 2021

**Make your stress resilience action plan, include:**

- How you will change your “Information Diet”
- Using a gratitude journal- what time a day will you do this?
- Focusing on what you can control
- Questioning your thinking
- Distracting yourself from your thoughts
- Being kind to yourself
- Doing fun things with family and friends
- Taking care of your health
- Talking to people you trust