



COVID-19 and Stress

Adapted from the Kalamazoo Literacy Council Health Literacy Work Group

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.

Change 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?

The news
What the governor does
Aging
The weather
Traffic
Other people's decisions

What are some things you can control?

What I eat
My information diet
How I exercise
If I smoke
If I look for good news

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

Question your thinking: The THINK Technique

When you have a thought, ask yourself: Is it...

- True?** Is this thought true?
- Helpful?** Is paying attention to this thought useful to me or others?
- Inspiring?** 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?

For example...

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?

- True?** Is this thought true?
- Helpful?** Is paying attention to this thought useful to Frank or to others?
- Inspiring?** Does it inspire him or hold him back?
- Necessary?** Is it important for him to focus on this thought?
- Kind?** Is the thought kind? If not, what would be a kinder thought?

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

Make your stress resilience action plan

- ★ How you will change your “Information Diet”
- ★ Using a gratitude journal
- ★ 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

More ideas

You can use this free workbook to help with stress:

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