

How to survive coronavirus anxiety: 8 tips from mental health experts

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By A. Pawlowski

1. Take a media break

Don't immerse yourself in news about the coronavirus 24/7. "You have to stop scouring social media and the internet for the latest twists and turns," Klapow advised. Stay up to date using trusted sources, like the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, then step away.

2. Wash your hands frequently

It's something that will actually lower your risk of getting sick. Learn how to do it properly: for a full 20 seconds using warm water and soap. "It's quite incredible how helpful that is," Harding noted.

3. Practice good self-care

Get plenty of nutrients by eating fruits and vegetables, exercise regularly and get enough sleep. "We know that sleep has a direct impact on the immune system. So you can take all the vitamin C you want, but if you're sleep deprived, your immune system is compromised," Klapow noted. "Although those things seem very benign — they don't seem as potent as putting on a face mask — they are things all of us can do to stay as healthy and as infection-free as possible."

4. Take sensible steps to prepare

There's definitely reason to take precaution, so being adequately prepared will provide peace of mind. Ready.gov, the government's website, has concrete tips, like storing a two-week supply of water and food.

5. Go for a walk outside

Time spent in nature is soothing for the mind and body. Sunlight may lower your blood pressure, research has found. "If you can, get a little sunshine during your day. Take a stroll. Take a deep breath," Harding suggested.

6. Acknowledge your anxiety

It's generally unhelpful to tell a highly-anxious person to just stop feeling anxious, Harding said. Instead — whether it's coronavirus or another panic-provoking situation — it's useful to just acknowledge the anxiety and work through it. "Name it to tame it" is a mantra in mental health for big emotions, she noted.

7. Write down your worries

Seeing the words on paper or on a screen may stop you from spinning yourself into a frenzy.

“What are you catastrophizing? Write down the things you find yourself thinking and reflect on them. Challenge your own thinking to get it more in balance and reasonable,” Benton said.

8. Send a little love to people who you care about

Put together a text message chain or email chain with family on it — that way you can have it set up before it feels like an emergency situation and easily communicate with your loved ones. “We’re definitely not in this alone,” Harding said.