



Stress and Coping

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community in which you live.

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Taking Care of Your Emotional Health

It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during and after a disaster. Everyone reacts differently, and your feelings will change over time. Notice and accept how you feel. Taking care of your emotional health during an emergency will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family. Self-care during an emergency will help your long-term healing.

People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment plans during an emergency and monitor for any new symptoms.

Take the following steps to cope with a disaster:

- **Take care of your body**– Try to eat healthy well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- **Connect with others**– Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships and build a strong support system.
- **Take breaks**– Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try taking in deep breaths. Try to do activities you usually enjoy.
- **Stay informed**– When you feel that you are missing information, you may become more stressed or nervous. Watch, listen or read the news for updates from officials. Be aware that there may be rumors during a crisis, especially on social media. Always check your sources and turn to reliable sources of information like your local government authorities.
- **Avoid too much exposure to the news**– Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do enjoyable activities and return to normal life as much as possible and check for updates between breaks.
- **Seek help when needed**– If distress impacts activities of your daily life for several days or weeks, talk to a clergy member, counselor, or doctor.

Look out for these common signs of distress:

- Feelings of numbness, disbelief, anxiety or fear.
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares and upsetting thoughts and images.
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Anger or short-temper.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>

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