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**MANAGING ANXIETY  
DURING THE  
CORONAVIRUS  
PANDEMIC**



# MANAGING ANXIETY DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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With everything going on right now, I feel vulnerable in a way I never have before. What about you?

I feel anxious about going to the grocery store or the doctor. I'm focused on avoiding close contact with anyone, wondering if the person near me in line will be the one to expose me to COVID-19. I worry about my wife, my kids, my grandchildren, and my parents—all at the same time! I'm afraid to be around them for fear of potentially exposing them and yet I want to keep them close.

It seems like I have no defense to protect myself or my loved ones from Coronavirus. In some ways, I feel like I'm just waiting for it to finally catch me. I'm tired of feeling so anxious all the time, even in the safety of my own home.

Do you feel the same way? Where can we possibly find hope when things seem so bleak?

Christians believe that God understands our tendency to worry and fear. In Phillipians 4:6, Paul speaks to anxiety with a bold suggestion: "Do not be anxious about anything."

Well, that sounds great! But how? How can we manage our anxiety, especially in such frightening times?

## The Importance of Managing Anxiety

Anxiety isn't always a bad thing. It can help motivate us to take appropriate action to respond to a situation. But constant focus on worry and fear with no resolution can lead to chronic anxiety and depression, which can take a toll on us emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically.

**CONSTANT FOCUS ON WORRY AND FEAR WITH NO RESOLUTION CAN LEAD TO CHRONIC ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION.**

Anxiety impacts our nervous system, influencing involuntary body functions like heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, and digestion. Our sympathetic nervous system helps prepare us for fight or flight by elevating our bodily responses, attention, and activity. Our parasympathetic nervous system helps us to calm down and rest.<sup>1</sup>

Prolonged anxiety can overstimulate the sympathetic nervous system, promoting a sustained state of vigilance and reduced ability to return to a state of calm and rest. It's important for our well-being that we learn to manage anxiety appropriately.

## 5 Helpful Steps for Managing Anxiety Associated with COVID-19

If you're struggling with anxiety more than usual right now, that's understandable. Most of us never could have imagined what it would be like to live through a pandemic, but here we are. Below you'll find five practical ways to manage your anxiety right now.

<sup>1</sup> Whether the sympathetic or parasympathetic nervous system is stimulated is influenced by how threatening

we interpret our environment and life events to be.

## 1. Limit Your Dose of Coronavirus News

It's easy to be bombarded by the constant flow of negative news related to the Coronavirus pandemic. While we all need to be aware of the current status and recommendations, we also have to know when enough is enough.

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**ANXIETY FLOURISHES WHEN  
WE FEEL UNCERTAIN.**

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Here are three specific tips to help yourself stay informed in a healthy way:

- **Avoid binge watching the daily news cycle.** Try to limit updates to no more than two per day.
- **Choose a news source that you have found to be balanced in reporting.** You want facts and reliable information.
- **Avoid watching the news right before bedtime.** Watching or reading the news before you attempt to sleep has the potential to feed anxious thoughts as you lie in bed, leading to difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, or full-blown insomnia.

## 2. Establish a Plan to Address Financial Challenges

Anxiety can cause us to procrastinate and avoid dealing with things we're fearful about. But one of the best ways to confront fear and anxiety is with a plan of action.

If you're dealing with a financial setback, take action now. Talk to creditors proactively in order to learn your options for delayed or reduced payments. Explore resources for financial assistance available in your region.

Let trusted friends and family know of your needs and give them the opportunity to support you in a hard time, whether that be emotionally or financially. Look to community and religious organizations in your area for resources that are available for you.

Anxiety flourishes when we feel uncertain. Creating a plan of action can help fight the feeling of total loss of control.

## 3. Manage What You Can Control and Give the Rest to God

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**“CAST ALL YOUR ANXIETY ON  
[JESUS] BECAUSE HE CARES  
FOR YOU.” —1 PETER 5:7**

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Practice focusing on what you can control more than what you can't control. Take the right precautions to protect yourself and others. Look for the ways you can make the most of this time in your life—whatever that may look like for you.

Some things in life will change but not everything will. And some of what has changed right now will be only temporary.

In times of anxiety, we tend to catastrophize things, anticipating the worst possible outcomes. Sharing our thoughts with loved ones can help us test our thoughts to see if we are being overly pessimistic and missing the more likely (and less severe) outcomes.

And there is another option, too. In 1 Peter 5:7, Peter tells us to do something profound: “Cast all your anxiety on [Jesus] because he cares for you.”

We do this by following Paul's guidance in Philippians 4:6, which I mentioned in part above: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your request to God.”

Christians believe that we are all invited and encouraged to be in [direct communication with God through prayer](#). In your prayers, don't hesitate to tell God of your fears and anxiety. Ask him to help you be realistically optimistic about the future and to provide the strength you need to make it through this time.

#### 4. Develop an Attitude of Hope

Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, once wrote, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."<sup>2</sup> That is, much of life (most of it, if we're honest) is out of our control. But we always have the power to choose how we respond to life.

We can choose to focus on what we've lost, or we can choose to [cultivate gratitude for what we have](#). We can choose to dwell in the darkness of negativity, or we can choose to focus on the light of hope.

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**THIS PROMISE OF REDEMPTION  
AND RESTORATION IS THE  
ETERNAL HOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN.**

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Frankl's work emphasized the incredible power of hope in even the most desperate circumstances. As long as we have hope to hold on to—that is, as long as we have an expectation for a brighter future—we can endure hardship in the present.

This is true for all people, but for Christians, hope runs even deeper. Especially in times like these, the world can seem like a hopeless, broken place. In the Christian understanding, that's true—but this imperfect world is only temporary.

Christians believe that God will ultimately restore our world to the way it was created to be. At that time, "He will wipe every tear from [our] eyes. 'There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things [will have] passed away."<sup>3</sup>

This promise of redemption and restoration is the [eternal hope of the Christian](#).

#### 5. Seek Professional Help When Needed

But sometimes, no matter what we try, we simply can't manage our anxiety on our own. That's OK—and it's a sign that it may be time to seek professional help.

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**YOU'RE NOT ALONE IN YOUR  
STRUGGLE WITH ANXIETY.**

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If you believe your anxiety has become chronic or if a loved one has expressed concern, see your primary care physician or a mental health clinician for assessment and treatment.<sup>4</sup>

You're not alone in your struggle with anxiety, and there is nothing to be ashamed of in seeking help. There is hope, and there is light to be found even in these dark days.

<sup>2</sup> Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 66.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible*, New International Version © 2011, Revelation 21:4.

<sup>4</sup> For more information and extra resources, see "[Mental](#)

[health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak](#)," World Health Organization, March 18, 2020. Also see the resources available through the Anxiety and Depression Association of America at <https://adaa.org/>.