

Taking Care of Your Mental Health in the Face of Uncertainty

We are hard-wired to want to know what is happening and to notice things that feel threatening to us. When things feel uncertain or when we don't generally feel safe, it's normal to feel stress. A large part of anxiety comes from a sense of what we think we should be able to control but can't. In times like these, our mental health can suffer. You might feel more on edge than usual, angry, helpless or sad. However, we can choose how we respond to current news events. If you are struggling, here are some things you can do to take care of your mental health in the face of uncertainty:

Separate what is in your control from what is not. There are things you can do, and it's helpful to focus on those. Wash your hands and remind others to wash theirs, limit your news consumption, etc.

Do what helps you feel a sense of safety. This will be different for everyone, and it's important not to compare yourself to others. When social distancing or isolating, just make sure you separate when you are isolating based on the potential for sickness versus isolating because it's part of depression.

Get outside in nature. Exercise helps both your physical and mental health. Get your daily dose of vitamin D from the sun and take a walk with a family member.

Challenge yourself to stay in the present. Perhaps your worry is compounding – you are not only thinking about what is currently happening, but also projecting into the future. When you find yourself worrying about something that hasn't happened, gently bring yourself back to the present moment. Notice the sights, sounds, tastes and other sensory experiences in your immediate moment and name them. Engaging in mindfulness activities is one way to help stay grounded when things feel beyond your control.

Stay connected and reach out if you need more support. Talk to trusted friends about what you are feeling. If you are feeling particularly anxious or if you are struggling with your mental health, it's okay to reach out to a mental health professional for support.

*Tips adapted from <https://afsp.org/taking-care-of-your-mental-health-in-the-face-of-uncertainty/>

For more resources visit EinsteinLiveWell.com, click Programs, then click Caring for the Caregiver



COVID-19 Mental Health Podcasts:

Coronavirus Anxiety: Baruch Fischhoff, PhD, an expert on public perception of risk and human judgment and decision-making, explains in this podcast why we worry about new risks more than familiar ones, how to calm our anxiety and what are the psychological effects of being quarantined. To listen, visit <https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/coronavirus-anxiety>

Managing Your Mental Health During COVID-19: We've all become too familiar with new terms – shelter in place, flatten the curve, social distancing. There's still no toilet paper at the grocery store. Feeling stressed? Anxious? At your wits end because you're trying to telework and the kids are making noise? Lynn Bufka, PhD and practicing psychologist, speaks about how the coronavirus has upended countless lives and how to manage your mental health. To listen, visit <https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/covid-19-mental-health>