



Center for Student Health & Counseling
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COVID-19 and Anxiety

In the midst of the ongoing pandemic, it is not surprising that we might feel a sense of anxiety. There are many adjustments, concerns, and unknowns that we are facing in our day to day lives. Listed below are some resources that may be helpful in coping with feelings of fear or anxiety, particularly related to COVID-19. We have also listed a few basic tools for coping with anxiety and panic; these are designed to be accessible while at home engaging in physical distancing.

Practice:

Five Senses: Look around the space you're in for five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can touch, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. You can name these things aloud or do this mentally; it will help you to focus on your environmental cues rather than the panicked thoughts.

Temperature: Hold an ice cube in your hands, or use cold water on your face, neck, or wrists. If it is cold outside, go for a walk (while engaging in appropriate physical distancing from others). The cooler temperature can assist in decreasing heart rate – be cautious about this if you have a heart condition and consult a medical professional if needed.

Paced breathing: take a full, deep breath in; aim to breathe from the belly/diaphragm rather than the chest. Hold your breath for 4 – 7 seconds, depending on what feels comfortable, and exhale slowly and fully. Work to make the exhale longer than the inhale; sometimes it helps to put your teeth or lips together to produce a sound while you breathe out to extend the exhalation.

Exercise: Try running or jumping in place for a few minutes, taking a brisk walk outside (again, be mindful of maintaining appropriate physical distance between yourself and others), or doing another exercise activity that will help to disperse overwhelming energy that can sometimes accompany panic attacks.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Actively tense and relax muscle groups in your body. This can be as simple as tightly clenching your fists for a few moments and then relaxing them, or you can move through various muscles in the body and tense/relax them. There are lots of narrated body scan meditations available on apps that can guide you through!

Self Soothe Kit: Using a small box, bag, or other container, store items that are comforting, relaxing, or otherwise help you engage in self-care. This can include things like tactile stimulation items (i.e., fidget spinners, stress balls, etc.), smells or tastes that are comforting (i.e., an essential oil scent that you find relaxing, or a favorite flavor of gum), photos of things you enjoy, etc. This may be useful in providing comfort and grounding when you are experiencing anxiety.

Learn More:

- COVID-19 Anxiety Toolkit: <https://www.virusanxiety.com/>
- Panic/Anxiety Workbook: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Panic>
- Panic Toolkit: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/static/uploads/files/panic-attacks-wfvmmxamhxoy.pdf>
- CDC Recommendations - Mental Health and Coping during COVID-19: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fcoping.html
- JED Foundation - Tips to Manage Stress and Anxiety: <https://www.jedfoundation.org/id-like-some-tips-to-manage-stress-and-worries/>
- APA - Five Ways to View Coverage of the Coronavirus: <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/pandemics>
- FACE COVID - How to respond effectively to the Corona crisis (e-book): <https://drive.google.com/file/d/117HY4z4mY5izJpR44ejuZ8rhTyoWEGEG/view>

Other Smartphone Apps:

- Ten Percent Coronavirus Sanity Kit: <https://www.tenpercent.com/coronavirussanityguide>
- Headspace: Meditation & Sleep <https://www.headspace.com/>
- Rootd: Panic Attack Relief <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/rootd-panic-attack-relief/id1289018369>
- Stop, Breathe & Think <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>
- Be Okay <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/id1208549262>
- Stop Panic and Anxiety Self Help (Android) https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.excelatlife.panic&hl=en_US

Seek Help:

You can access support by contacting the Multnomah County Crisis line (503-988-4888) or the Crisis Text Line (text HOME to 741741). If you need in-person evaluation, Unity Center for Behavioral Health (1225 NE 2nd Ave) has a mental health emergency room. SAMHSA also offers a Disaster Distress Hotline 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.