

Dear Colleagues, Students, Parents and the larger Community,

This is a time when many people are feeling anxious about COVID-19. The following may be helpful resources about how to cope with that anxiety.

Joan Whitney, Ph.D., Psychologist
Associate Vice President and Executive Director
Patricia B. and Gary M. Holloway University Counseling Center
Villanova University, Villanova, PA 19085. 610-519-4050
Joan.whitney@villanova.edu

Coping with Anxiety Related to COVID-19

American Psychological Association:

[Five Ways to View Coverage of the Coronavirus](#)

Updated March 2020

New reports about the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, becoming more widespread are making some people anxious. Below are some tips to help you manage your anxiety, put news reports in perspective and maintain a positive outlook.

1. **Keep things in perspective.** Take a deep breath and remind yourself that the number of confirmed infections in the U.S. is extremely low. The fact that there is a great deal of news coverage on this issue does not necessarily mean that it presents any threat to you or your family.
2. **Get the facts.** It is helpful to adopt a more clinical and curious approach as you follow news reports about the virus. To that end, you will want to find a credible source you can trust. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a [webpage dedicated to information on the coronavirus outbreak](#). You may also find useful information from local or state public health agencies or even your family physician.
3. **Communicate with your children.** Discuss the news coverage of the coronavirus with honest and age-appropriate information. Parents can also help allay distress by focusing children on routines and schedules. Remember that children will observe your behaviors and emotions for cues on how to manage their own feelings during this time.
4. **Keep connected.** Maintaining social networks can foster a sense of normality and provide valuable outlets for sharing feelings and relieving stress. Feel free to share useful information you find on governmental websites with your friends and family. It will help them deal with their own anxiety.
5. **Seek additional help.** Individuals who feel an overwhelming nervousness, a lingering sadness, or other prolonged reactions that adversely affect their job performance or interpersonal relationships should consult with a trained and experienced mental health professional. Psychologists and other appropriate mental health providers can help people deal with extreme stress. These professionals work with individuals to help them find constructive ways to manage adversity.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

[Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19](#)

Things you can do to support yourself:

- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. 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 other activities you enjoy to return to normal life.
- Connect with others. Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking.

Psych Central:

[Coronavirus Anxiety: 4 Ways to Cope with Fear](#)

By John M. Grohol, Psy.D.

Founder & Editor-in-Chief

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As the coronavirus spreads, more and more people are becoming anxious about what it means in their life. After all, entire cities have been quarantined in China. Travel restrictions have been put in place throughout the world.

It's perfectly normal to feel [anxiety](#) about this emerging health crisis. The coronavirus can be a deadly disease, but we also know that it's most likely to be deadly in people who already have a weakened immune system. Here's how to cope with the anxiety and fear surrounding the coronavirus outbreak.

1. Don't Inflate the Risk

Our brains are used to taking something that is made to sound scary and unknown, and inflating the risk of it actually happening to us. It's a part of our brain's intrinsic, built-in fight-or-flight response. Big and scary gets attention. Ordinary but also potentially bad for our well-being gets less attention. We're scared of getting mauled by a coyote but think nothing of getting into an automobile and driving every day. This despite the chances of dying in an automobile crash being much higher.

So, a new virus outbreak is scarier than an existing health epidemic. Many news outlets and other sources of information online and social media overemphasize the problem — and its accompanying risks. The ordinary flu is so far responsible for 15 million infections, 140,000 hospitalizations, and 8,200 deaths in the United States just this season. In comparison, as of January 31, 2020, the coronavirus has only infected approximately 8,000 people around the world (the vast majority of them in China) with less than 200 deaths. It is believed the coronavirus's death rate may be around [2 percent](#), according to Reuters. [1](#)

In short, the flu is far more common and so kills far more people every year. While the coronavirus may be more deadly, it's not clear that it will infect as many people as the flu does.

2. Take Normal, Healthy Precautions

Both flu and coronaviruses are spread through everyday contact, through touch, a cough, or a sneeze. If you're sick, stay home and don't go to work or out in the world. If you're not sick, stay away from close contact with a person who is and engage in healthy habits when it comes to cleanliness.

That primarily means washing your hands regularly and thoroughly. Out running errands? Come home and wash your hands, saying the ABC song in your head as you do. Use warm-to-hot water, plenty of soap, and don't stop washing until the song is done. Can't get to a sink? Carry a small travel-sized bottle of hand sanitizer with you (keep it in your car if you prefer), and use it regularly.

Keeping your immune system happy and healthy can help too, especially if you do get sick. A healthy immune system starts with a balanced diet and getting the amount of [sleep](#) you need to feel well-rested every night. Engaging in regular exercise is also important, even in the winter.

3. Avoid Overconsumption of Media

The longer you watch or read something, the more money a company makes, whether it's online, on the TV, or on your phone. The coronavirus is a great opportunity for companies, as they work to scare you into believing that this outbreak is something you need to worry about constantly **right this very minute**.

It's not. So instead of playing into their hands, limit your consumption of media and stories related to the outbreak. Scientists and public health officials are working overtime to better understand the virus and are looking at ways to limit its impact. Trust in their work and efforts.

If you need updates, check out a government resource for the best, most accurate information, such as the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

4. Use Your Past Coping Skills

No matter what the focus of one's anxiety, using what's worked in the past to help manage those feelings is usually a good bet. Maybe it's engaging in self-talk, to undo the irrational thoughts coming into your head with rational, fact-based responses. Maybe it's reaching out to a trusted friend or family member, just to talk through your anxiety. Or maybe it's engaging in some [mindfulness or meditation techniques](#) — ones that you've learned and that have worked for you in the past.

Whatever works to help relieve your stress and reduce your anxiety, try to do more of that in times like this, when you feel like the stress of this virus outbreak is getting to you.

Remember, outbreaks like this do occur from time to time throughout the world. It's normal. While they can be very scary — especially if you live in a highly-infected area — the actual chances of your becoming infected are very small if you take common-sense precautions.

Resources & Information

For more information about the coronavirus, please visit:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [CDC: COVID-19 Website](#)
- [CDC: Information for Travel](#)
- [CDC: Enhanced Screening Procedures](#)
- [CDC: Health information](#)
- [CDC: Prevention and Treatment](#)
- [US State Department](#)
- [US State Department Smart Travel Enrollment Program](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)