



# Managing Stress, Worry & Disappointment in the Midst of COVID-19

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For Privia Staff and Patients

# 60 Second Check-In

- How am I feeling?
- Where am I holding stress in my body?
- What worries and frustrations can I release right now?





# Why anxiety peaks in crises

- During extreme situations like pandemic and quarantine, adrenaline and cortisol levels spike, putting us on edge and ready to deploy “fight or flight” defenses.
- When basic safety needs are threatened, survival instincts kick in for self-preservation (i.e., hoarding toilet paper).
- Anxiety hates uncertainty and right now there is no clear timeline for when the uncertainty will end.



# Anxiety during COVID

Feelings of:

Helplessness

Vulnerability

Isolation

Discrimination

Claustrophobia

Worry spiral, catastrophic thinking



# The Effects of Isolation

Social distancing pushes against human beings' fundamental need for connection with one another. Especially during difficult times, people feel an urge to commiserate, to comfort, and be comforted by each other. Experiments show that the support of loved ones softens our response to stress and even our brain's response to painful electric shocks. By contrast, loneliness is psychologically poisonous; it increases sleeplessness and depression as well as immune and cardiovascular problems. Chronic loneliness produces a similar mortality risk as smoking one pack of cigarettes per day!



# Distant Socializing instead of Social Distancing

1. Think about how you can interact with others without putting your health (or theirs) at risk. Can you speak to your neighbors from over a fence or across balconies? We've seen this in Italy.
2. If you have access to it, use video technology to stay in touch. Seeing someone's facial expressions can help increase connection.
3. Check in with your friends, family, and neighbors regularly. Wherever you can, assist people in your life who may be more vulnerable (i.e. those who cannot easily use the internet to shop online).
4. It is not just family and friends who require support, but others in your community. Showing kindness to others not only helps them but can also increase your sense of purpose and value, improving your own psychological well-being.



# Help for anxiety in extreme situations:

- 1. Limit your exposure to news and social media.**
  - Only get your news from reputable sources and try to confine viewing to no more than one hour per day.
- 2. Keep a routine.**
  - As anyone who has worked from home for awhile will tell you, it is important to keep a schedule to stay on track.
  - Try to get up at the same time everyday, shower, dress, eat three square meals, exercise, etc.



# Help for anxiety in extreme situations:

## **3. Try to keep the problem in perspective.**

- Although it is possible that terrible things could happen, it is not probable.
- Most of this suffering is temporary. Try to use this time to reset and retool, redefining your values and targeting your goals for the future.

## **4. Be kind to yourself.**

This isn't your fault, it's perfectly normal to feel this way.



# Ask Yourself

*“What is the worst thing that could happen and could I handle it?”*

The answer is always YES, although anxiety would have you believe otherwise.



# The Power of Choice

We are not helpless, own your decision to practice social distancing for the good of the whole. Making it a personal decision rather than something that has been forced upon us establishes a sense of agency that turns us from **victims** into **survivors**.

We have been making choices to distance ourselves the past few weeks out of concern about the more fragile in our communities. We can see our behavior and our social distancing as a way we are expressing our values during this time, reflecting compassion, generosity, and kindness.

# New Mantra

A person wearing a dark hoodie and a cap is sitting on a large rock in the middle of a body of water. The person is facing away from the camera, looking out at a sunset. The sky is filled with colorful clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue. The water is calm, reflecting the colors of the sky. In the background, there are dark mountains under a twilight sky.

I am safe.

I am resilient.

I am adaptable. It's time to  
over-protect, but not to  
over-react.

We will  
persevere.

# 7 Stages of Grief

(Modified Kubler-Ross Model)

## Shock\*

- Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.

## Denial

- Trying to avoid the inevitable.

## Anger

- Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion.

## Bargaining

- Seeking in vain for a way out.

## Depression

- Final realization of the inevitable.

## Testing\*

- Seeking realistic solutions.

## Acceptance

- Finally finding the way forward.



# Stages of Grief during COVID

- **Denial**
  - *This virus won't affect us.*
- **Anger**
  - *You're making me stay home and taking away my activities.*
- **Bargaining**
  - *Okay, if I social distance for two weeks everything will be better, right?*
- **Sadness**
  - *I don't know when this will end.*
- **Acceptance**
  - *This is happening; I have to figure out how to proceed.*



# Moving Through Grief

- When we are rash to judge others who may not be practicing social responsibility, perhaps a kinder reframe is that they are early on in the grieving process.

*“The only way to move through the stages of grief productively is to allow yourself to feel the feelings.”*





# Lessons Learned from the Great Depression

- Distinguish wants from needs
- Have liquid assets and a three month emergency fund
- Diversify your skillset so you have multiple employment options
- Get to know your neighbors
- Protect your family at all costs
- Be scrappy (grow your own food, clip coupons, sell what you don't need)





# Locus of Control

## Can Change

- practicing social distancing
- washing your hands
- saving for a rainy day
- the people whose company you keep
- your attitude
- your personal health habits

## Can't Change

- other peoples' choices and behaviors
- COVID's existence
- economic turmoil
- government policy
- availability of supplies
- school closures

**“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.” ~ Victor Frankl**

Don't waste your time and  
energy on what you cannot  
change





# Relationships

Long periods of time spent sequestered invariably make tensions high. Sensory deprivation and understimulation can make us short-tempered, bored, and lonely even while together. If your loved ones have emotional challenges of their own, the intensity compounds.





## How To Not Kill Your Significant Other After a Long Period In Quarantine

- Even though you may have a great quantity of time together, try to ensure adequate quality time that meets each other's needs.
- Seize this time as an opportunity to reconnect, trying new projects and challenges together.
- Find a quiet private space you can retreat to as needed to cry, pray, or scream into a pillow (even if it is in the car or closet).
- Be patient with each other, your partner is also likely struggling with managing fear and insecurity. Make time for a daily check-in.
- Be honest with your needs. It's okay to crave personal time.



# For Parents

Children and teens react, in part, to what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with COVID calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children.

-Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.

-Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.

-Try to keep their routines as normal as possible.



# Support for Parents

“In two weeks I have had to become a daycare provider, school teacher, counselor, accountant, and a novice epidemiologist all while still trying to work a full-time job from home that may or may not be able to pay me.”

*-Stressed mother of 2 young children*

If you have a partner, try to alternate childcare in shifts. Everyone can carry their weight with chores, even young children can learn to pick up after themselves. Call Grandparents on FaceTime and let them virtually babysit :)



# Healthy coping

- While quarantine may limit the range of coping behaviors available, here are a few options to start with:
  - Journal
  - Exercise
  - Listen to music
  - Take a warm bath
  - Check on a loved one
  - Use technology to your advantage (video chat a friend, take a free class online, watch funny cat videos)
  - Download a relaxation app like Calm or Headspace
  - Paint a picture
  - Join a virtual book club
  - Organize your living space
  - Cook a new recipe

What are your “go-to” strategies?



# Mindfulness

It has been said that depression comes from ruminating on the past and anxiety is preoccupation about the future. The solution is trying to live in the present moment as much as possible. Our workaholic society makes us feel guilty for slowing down and we forget how to push the pause button with pleasure. Simple practices such as taking a walk and paying attention to what you see, hear, smell, and feel is a great way to tune out unhelpful anxious thoughts and connect with your body. Regular meditation has actually proven to rewire neural circuitry.

*Calm the body and the mind will follow.*



# Symptoms to Watch Out For:

- Excessive tearfulness
- Weight gain or loss without trying
- Insomnia or Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest and pleasure (not just from lack of pleasurable activities available)
- Irritability
- Excessive guilt
- Over-use of drugs and alcohol
- Suicidal thoughts

*These are symptoms of clinical anxiety and depression. If you start to experience these, it might be time to talk to your doctor and consult a mental health professional.*

Thank you for your time, thanks to the doctors who care about your physical and mental health who suggested you for this webinar, and best wishes for safety and security for all during this trying time.

Thank  
you

