

Coping in Times of Uncertainty

During times of uncertainty, it is common for people to experience anxiety, worry and stress. However, there are ways to reduce these feelings and increase your tolerance to uncertainty. Reducing the effects of stress is important for your overall health and well-being.

Now, more than ever, there are many sources competing for your attention. What you focus your attention on greatly influences how you feel. Keep in mind, you get to choose what you give your attention to. One way to reduce fear and stress is to limit the amount of time you spend watching or reading the news. Try spending just 30–60 minutes a day to get the latest information, then focus on something

else. Be aware of how you feel as you scroll through social media. Stop following or reading social media sources that cause fear or stress. Make a choice to spend more time looking at content that's uplifting or inspiring, or even take a break from social media altogether.

Worry comes from thoughts focused on potential difficulties or an uncertain future. Notice if this is happening, then choose to shift your thoughts to focus on the present moment. Keeping your mind focused on the present helps prevent your imagination from wandering and can stop you from feeling like you are out of control.

Tips to help you focus on the present and bring a positive state of mind:

- **Practice gratitude** – make a list of things you are grateful for each day.
- **Look for the positives** – when you're frustrated, ask yourself the question, "How is this a good thing?", and notice what comes to mind.
- **Maintain physical distancing, but stay connected to others** by phone, email or other social apps. Talking with others can help with your perspective.
- **Get outside** – exercise, go for a walk, sit on your porch, or watch your kids play in the yard to enjoy fresh air and sunshine.
- **Meditate** – explore the many apps and free online resources for guided meditations.
- **Practice affirmations** – write a positive or reassuring phrase on a piece of paper and put it somewhere you will see it often, or put it in your calendar in your phone with a reminder that shows frequently.
- **Breathe** – focus on the sounds and sensation of your breath as you inhale and exhale.
- **Choose to have a positive impact on people around you** – smile, give positive feedback, share some positive news, or express your gratitude.
- **Look for opportunities** for personal growth and to become more self-aware. You may discover new strengths and how resilient you can be.
- **Help others when you can** – volunteer, offer to help your neighbors or support local charities.
- **Practice self care** – get plenty of rest, cook healthy meals, read, exercise, and practice relaxation techniques.

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If you have children, the following may help:

- Reassure them they're safe.
- Let them talk about their worries.
- Share your own coping skills.
- Limit their news exposure.
- Create a routine and structure.
- Encourage creativity and fun.

Remember that people accept and adjust to change at different rates and have different comfort levels with uncertainty. Keeping this in mind can help you be patient with others, including family members (whether in person or by phone), friends or strangers. Most importantly, be patient with yourself too.



Resources

Health Net Federal Services, LLC has a variety of options to explore if you think you may have anxiety, depression or high levels of stress: Take one of our [telephone-based classes](#), visit our anxiety and depression or stress management topics in our [health topics section](#) or [self-nominate](#) yourself for one-on-one coaching with an expert specialist in anxiety, depression or other chronic health condition.

American Heart Association – [10 Ways to Relax in Nature and Stress Less](#)

American Heart Association – [3 Tips to Manage Stress](#)

Anxiety and Depression Association of America – [Understanding the Facts of Stress](#)

Anxiety and Depression Association of America – [Tips to Manage Anxiety and Stress](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – [Coronavirus Information](#)

Mayo Clinic – [Meditation: A simple, fast way to reduce stress](#)

Mayo Clinic – [3 ways to become more stress resilient](#)

Positive Psychology – [Positive Daily Affirmations: Is There Science Behind It?](#)

VA's National Center for PTSD – [Managing Stress Associated with the COVID-19 Virus Outbreak](#)

