

Protect Yourself from “Anxiety Contagion” During the Pandemic

You Should Know

It is normal to experience anxiety during the coronavirus pandemic, especially when there are still so many unknowns and our lives seem to change day-to-day. However, many people find their anxiety levels are getting out of hand and they have a difficult time dealing with anything else. This worksheet is designed to help you regain some control over your anxiety by limiting what some people refer to as “fear contagion.”

Studies suggest that negative emotional states are contagious, much like the virus. The more you are exposed to panicky and anxious people, the more anxiety you are likely to experience. Fortunately, studies also find that positive emotional states are also contagious. Being in the presence of people who are calm, confident, and positive can reduce your fear and anxiety. This is especially true when you are around positive people who are authority figures, or people you depend on and respect.

What to Do

You can fight the effects of “anxiety contagion” by spending more time with people in your life who make you feel comforted, safe, and calm – or just make you laugh.

Write in the names of people like this below, and also note how you will communicate with them (i.e., face-to-face, by phone, or by video chat).

My supports	How I will communicate with them

If you cannot name any personal supports, consider watching webinars and videos that offer encouragement, calmness, and reassurance. Personal development websites and apps like Sounds True, Shambhala Publications, Head Space, and Simple Habit are all offering free courses and meditations to help people navigate through fear and anxiety.

Write down some resources you plan to explore below:

Additionally, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you limit the time you spend watching the news, reading headlines online, and visiting social media sites. Hearing about the pandemic constantly will serve to increase your anxiety, fear, and feelings of helplessness.

Here are some suggestions for reducing your exposure to news and screen time featuring pandemic-related information:

- Limit your viewing time of coronavirus pandemic news. For instance, if you usually watch the news or read headlines several hours a day, try reducing that to one or two scheduled times a day – and ideally, not at bedtime.
- Unsubscribe from media alerts and “breaking news” on your phone and email.
- Pick a single news source you trust.
- Turn your phone off while sleeping.
- Look for “feel good” stories that highlight the kindness, creativity, and problem-solving abilities of people around the world.
- Other ideas: _____

Reflections on This Exercise

Which activities were most effective in dealing with “anxiety contagion?”

After one week of limiting news related to the pandemic and exposing yourself to positive people or online resources, what improvements have you noticed in your own anxiety level and mood?

What else can you do to reduce your anxiety related to the pandemic?
