

# Patient Education

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## Tips to Help You Cope in Uncertain Times

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### About this topic

When your world is uncertain, fear, worry and anxiety may try to take over your thoughts. These feelings are normal, but it is hard to not let them get in the way of your everyday activities. In times of crisis, you may not feel prepared or you may feel out of control. You may notice you pay more attention to the news than ever before. Current events may be the center of all of your conversations. Your worry may affect your work, what you do, or how you relate to your friends. You may have problems with sleep, appetite, and your overall health. Worry may also affect your whole family.

### General

Here are some tips to help you try to worry less when your world feels uncertain:

- Stay in touch with others.
  - You may not be able to physically be together but take time to connect with people in other ways. You can reach out to others on your phone to talk, video chat, or email.
  - Schedule regular times to visit with friends and family in whatever way is possible.
- Become informed but be mindful of how you choose to do this.
  - Use reliable sources for your information.
  - Limit how much time you watch or listen to the news.
  - Talk about other topics with family and friends.
- Learn to live with some uncertainty.
  - Worry does not change the future or make it better.
  - Remind yourself that you cannot know the future.
  - Think about what is going well right now.
  - Take life one day at a time.
- Choose when you will worry.

- Accept the fact that you worry. Don't try to stop it, but rather take charge of your worry.
- Chose a time to think about what worries you. Give yourself some time each day. An adequate amount of time is 10 to 20 minutes. After you use that time to think about what worries you, you can go on with your day.
- Take time each day to write down your worries. Then you can use your list during your chosen time to worry.
- Decide if there is something you can do about your situation.
  - Some worries are about problems that can be solved. Think about all the ways that you can solve it. For example, "I am worried I will lose my job." You may decide to work hard, finish projects, and volunteer for new things.
  - You cannot control all situations. Accept that there is nothing that you can do to change them. Try to make something positive from a negative situation.
- Take control of your mind and body.
  - Learn to meditate. Even a few minutes of slow breathing can calm both your mind and body.
  - It helps to do things with your hands. Learn to knit, draw, doodle, or work with wood or clay.
  - Limit screen time with your computer and the television. Instead, talk to people, read a book, or go for a walk.
  - Get plenty of sleep.
  - Eat a healthy diet.
  - Avoid over use of alcohol.
  - Get regular exercise. Try to get outside a little each day.
- Look for activities to distract you when you worry.
  - Look for ways to help others. When you think about someone else, your own worries will be less.
  - Choose a task you can finish and feel good about. You may want to clean out a closet or a drawer or try a new recipe.
  - Visit with other people. Call a friend. Write a letter. Find out how you can volunteer.
- Seek professional help.
  - Talk about your worries with your medical doctor. Your doctor may suggest different treatments to help you.
  - Talking to a counselor may help you cope with uncertainty and lessen your worry.

## Where can I learn more?

Health Finder

<https://healthfinder.gov/healthtopics/category/health-conditions-and-diseases/heart-health/manage-stress>

KidsHealth

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/worrying.html>

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Anxiety/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

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