Managing Your Anxiety in the Midst of COVID-19

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During the current coronavirus pandemic, we have been bombarded with information from multiple sources–live news reports, social media posts, and word of mouth–reiterating the rising statistics and potential dire consequences of exposure to the virus.

"For many of us, this wave of information has elicited a fear of the unknown that is propelled by believing we lack control over the present situation," said Dr. Whitney Robenolt, a psychologist within the Center for Counseling and Human Development at Bloomsburg University. She added, "These types of fears can be flood us with anxiety and a sense of isolation, especially in the wake of social distancing."

In order to regain a sense of control and well-being, Dr. Robenolt and the Pennsylvania Psychological Association offer the following tips for managing your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. **Develop A Plan:** Focus on aspects of your life that you *can* control.
   - Discuss a plan with family and loved ones regarding how to manage situations that may arise, such as who is going to care for children if schools close and lists of emergency resources.
   - Talk calmly with your children about COVID-19 in way that they can understand. See suggestions at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html
   - Create a daily schedule in order to promote stability and a sense of normalcy for your children
   - Develop a plan with your employer or employees about ways to manage exposure and risk within the workplace.

2. **Be Mindful:** Maintain awareness of preventative hygienic behaviors recommended by the CDC to reduce risk and minimize the spread of the coronavirus. These include frequent handwashing, sanitizing surfaces and maintaining a 6-foot distance from others.

3. **Get the Right Facts:**
   - Seek information from credible sources in order to better understand the risks to yourself and how to limit the potential spread of COVID-19. (ex: cdc.gov/ and ourworldindata.org/coronavirus)
   - Take a break from social media in order to reduce unnecessary exposure to information that may be anxiety inducing or inaccurate.

4. **Care for Yourself:** Maintain a consistent self-care schedule in order to reduce stress buildup. For example:
   - Exercise
   - Meditation
   - Cooking

- Recreational activity, such as completing a puzzle, reading a book, or doing something creative.
- During this period of social distancing, talk with family and friends via Skype, Facetime, or just a phone call.

If the above suggestions do not help ease your anxiety to a manageable level, you may benefit from talking to a psychologist or other mental health professional. Many professionals are offering psychotherapy via secure Internet video connection at this time. [The Pennsylvania Psychological Association can assist you in finding a local psychologist.](#) Or ask your health care professional or a trusted friend to recommend someone.