

## EDITORIAL

# Managing Anxiety During COVID-19 Times

Usha Mohan Das

Chief Coach, CEO, Dr. Ushy's Wisdom Works

To even imply that the global changes brought about by COVID-19 are not necessarily all spiteful may sound blasphemous. When 4 million humans are affected the total weight of the infecting viruses is 2 G. This Corona virus has brought humankind to its knees. The world has turned upside down and will never, ever be the same again. Let us introspect. Could there still be a silver lining?

Worldwide there have been hundreds of calls for immediate innovations to address thousands of problems directly and indirectly resulting from the pandemic. The global impact of COVID-19 has reaffirmed that pandemics do not care about geographical borders.

One thing is clear: in times of crisis, and *especially* in times of crisis, strong humans must project optimism and look for opportunities and possibilities.

COVID-19 has resulted in the use of drones and robots in government hospitals. It is just a question of time before multiple uses are discovered for these in a wide variety of situations. Drones and robots are here to stay. What today is disruptive technology will undoubtedly be the norm in the post corona era.

Nobody really has any idea when and how things will return to normal, and “the new normal” will probably not be anything like what we remember. Meanwhile ask yourself: When will I next take a flight? When will I next go to an indoor concert or sporting event? When will I next shake the hand of a stranger?

As the COVID-19 pandemic and its far-reaching implications continue to unfold globally and, in our community, it's normal for people to experience a wide range of thoughts, feelings and reactions including:

- Feeling stressed or overwhelmed
- Anxiety, worry, or fear
- Racing thoughts
- Sadness, tearfulness, loss of interest in usual enjoyable activities
- Physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate, stomach upset, fatigue, or other uncomfortable sensations
- Frustration, irritability, or anger
- Restlessness or agitation
- Feeling helpless
- Difficulty concentrating or sleeping

But amid the gloom and doom, there seems to be one single silver lining: the pandemic has brought about a behavioral shift; making people more aware of their health. People in India have learnt respiratory hygiene. Many are wearing masks. This will not only help in combating COVID-19, but also diseases like TB, which kills more than five lakh people in India, and flu, which takes 60,000 lives a year.

As the events surrounding the virus outbreak unfold, it's understandable that you might begin to feel increasing stress. Some of the following ways will ensure that you avoid all the anxiety that tends to build up within during this lockdown period.

### Take a Break

The constantly negative news can be a lot to handle. Decide the amount of exposure to the news that works for you. Play with puzzles, read a book, reorganize or clean instead.

**Connect with Others**

During these times of uncertainty or fear, it is essential to connect with others. Being in isolation and all the unwarranted fear can lead to stress and depression. Reach out to family, friends, and colleagues regularly through phone calls, messages or emails.

**Take Adequate Rest**

Stress and anxiety created by the evolving news and information overload can be aggravated by a lack of sleep. Getting the recommended amount of sleep aids in managing stress and staying focused during the day. Avoid stimulants like caffeine, alcohol or nicotine before bedtime. Having a bedtime routine is also recommended, such as taking a bath, or having a cup of non-caffeinated herbal tea before you go to sleep. Planning for the next day also helps alleviate stress due to uncertainty.

**Exercise Regularly**

Exercising helps release endorphins within your system, which play a vital role in elevating your mood and keeping a positive attitude. Stretching exercises and yoga also help keep you fit and your mind calm.

**Maintain a Healthy Diet**

Unnecessary stress can cause you to overeat or eat unhealthily, adversely affecting your metabolism. Avoid emotional eating by

identifying trigger factors and keeping away from the urge. Keeping your blood sugar levels stable throughout the day helps regulate your mood and emotions. Good nutrition also keeps your immune system healthy.

**Offer to Help People when You Can**

If you need help with groceries or medications for someone at home, do not hesitate to ask for help. Similarly, if you are stepping out, you can take a list of errands from elderly or sick people who cannot get out. Helping people out gives you a sense of fulfillment and calms the restless mind.

The virus can turn even the sanest people into hypochondriacs. Reading about people experiencing all kinds of symptoms on the internet can make you start scrutinizing yourself for the slightest changes. Your mind begins to race through the possibilities and tries to figure out whether there is danger and what to do about it. The challenge lies in managing the anxiety that comes with it. Avoid building up small things in your head and focus on the now. Avoid thinking too far into the future and try to stay positive

Simple steps like these can help bring a sense of normalcy and help you cope with the changing environment. Try to keep those around you, especially children, calm and focused. Reach out to a counselor telephonically if you are unable to manage your anxiety on your own. Ensure that you don't give in to panic and stress as it compromises your immunity in the long run.