

Looking after your mental health during COVID-19.

1. Stressors can trigger anxiety. Multiple stressors at the same time can ratchet up anxiety.
2. Loss of a sense of control is a major contributing factor to anxiety.
3. Taking back control, where possible, can significantly help your mental wellbeing.
4. By dwelling on anxiety provoking factors, you cannot control, you potentially exhaust yourself by using up emotional energy that could be applied in a more positive way.
5. This becomes even more important when the stress is prolonged, as with COVID-19. Stamina and endurance are important factors here.
6. Make a list of factors that you can and cannot control. **Structure, routine and planning** enhances control, so take a few minutes and write down your list and plans. *Share this approach with family, colleagues, friends.*

You cannot control certain things: be accepting of this reality and let things go that you cannot control.	But there is much that you can control. Take care of yourself
Virus: news about the virus, statistics about the virus.	Sleep
Other people's behavior	*Unplug from the negative side of social media. Limit email, twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram where possible. Avoid the 24 hour news cycle. Don't listen repeatedly to the news. Most important before going to bed!
Economic news	Nutrition: don't overdo caffeine, alcohol, sugar
Stock market	*Take short breaks during your workday
Unemployment rate	Structure time with family. Dinner together. See the positives here.
Rumors	Maintain social contacts. Staying in touch by phone.
Avoid catastrophic thinking in which you stack one negative thought on top of another. Catch yourself doing this and interrupt it with a positive distractor.	Quiet periods of reflection, meditation, mindfulness. Stay in the moment, keep your focus on the moment. Step back to gain a better perspective
	Make a list of enjoyable activities. Music, movies, reading etc. Respite as a form of resilience. **
	"To resist the psychological effects of COVID-19 you need to find a form of imaginative freedom that does not ignore the pestilence." **
	Exercise, treadmill at home, stretching, tai chi, yoga.
	Plan your shopping to make sure you have the essentials but avoid frantic and excessive shopping.
	Remember there may be stressors other than COVID-19
	Ask for help/therapy if necessary.

** Kyra Morris. New Yorker April 13, 2020

copyright of Anthony Feinstein