

## Coronavirus: Combatting Fear

As in previous outbreaks of infectious disease, rising fear of the coronavirus has led to an increase in anxiety and fear. Those emotions can, in turn, lead to short tempers, angry outbursts and even aggression.

The most important action anyone can take in such situations is to lower the levels of fear and anxiety by listening to credible sources of information, including the local government, trusted media, and health officials. Understanding the facts and heeding sound advice on safety is the best way to remain calm. But another important step is to understand fear and to learn to conquer it.

Consider the following tips for how to cope with fear:

- 1. Validate it.** Fear is normal. Everyone experiences fear. By understanding that you are not alone in your feelings, you may be able to better accept it and move on.
- 2. Share your fear.** Confronting your fears is difficult enough; doing it alone can be overwhelming. Build a support system by telling those close to you how you feel. They may be able to help you get through rough situations.
- 3. Create a safe environment.** Certain tasks, events or settings may be triggering your fear. Stick to familiar, safe places and faces until you are ready to face fear-provoking situations.
- 4. Do research.** Do you fear needles? Find others who feel the same way and find out how they overcame their fears. Worried about the coronavirus? Get trusted information from the World Health Organization, the United Nations and similar sources. Understand what if any danger exists; this can help to keep fear within an acceptable range.
- 5. Understand your level of control.** No one has control over every aspect of his or her life. Focus on what you do have control over and the strengths you possess. Then, use some of that strength when confronting your fears.
- 6. Be patient.** Fear does not leave as suddenly as it appears. Give yourself time to cope, and work on overcoming your fear every day, little by little.

### Preventing Fear

While you cannot totally avoid fear, you can take steps to keep your body and mind healthy and balanced. Because stress can aggravate fear, the key is to keep your stress levels low by:

1. Getting enough rest.
2. Exercising regularly.
3. Eating healthy meals on a regular schedule.
4. Avoiding stimulants, such as caffeine and nicotine.
5. Avoiding depressants, such as alcohol or tranquilizers.
6. Staying organized.
7. Avoiding taking on too many projects, commitments and engagements.
8. Doing relaxing exercises, such as breathing, yoga, meditation and muscle-relaxation techniques.

### Helping Others Cope with Fear

If a loved one is experiencing fear, here are a few simple steps you can take to help lessen his or her stress and anxiety levels:

- 1. Be aware of typical fear reactions.** Sleep disturbances or nightmares, social withdrawal, reverting to childlike behaviors and a lack of focus on work or school can be indicators of fear. If these symptoms are present, you may want to talk with your loved one.
- 2. Listen.** Be available when he or she wants to talk. Refrain from offering too much advice; instead, try to be understanding.
- 3. Be patient.** Fear can be limiting; it can be especially difficult to understand if you cannot comprehend the basis of the fear. Try to remember that everyone has different fears and levels of fear.
- 4. Suggest that your loved one seek professional help.** Patience and understanding can only go so far. A therapist can help your loved one identify the root of the problem and determine how to best deal with the fear.