

Tips for Managing Psychologically with Covid19

The spread of Covid19 has changed much about how our lives function and has created enormous stress and uncertainty for all of us. It is very normal to have your emotions and capacity to cope be variable – feeling good some days and feeling terribly anxious, afraid, or overwhelmed on others. Some common experiences you might have on a hard day include:

- Fear and anxiety about the future and your health
- Feeling powerless, sad, disappointed or depressed
- Difficulty with concentration
- Apathy and emotional numbing
- Sleep difficulties, nightmares, and intrusive thoughts
- Irritability and anger
- Preoccupation with avoiding exposure to germs or illness
- Increased urges to use alcohol or drugs

What Can I Do?

1. **Be Kind.** Remember that there is no “right” way to feel and that ups and downs are normal – we are all experiencing this in some form together. Remember to be patient with yourself and practice compassion. The uncertainty is hard enough; you don’t need the addition of an internal bully to criticize how you are coping and add to the struggle. A great resource to help you practice compassion with yourself is: www.self-compassion.org
2. **Connect! Connect! Connect!** We are social creatures by nature. Maintaining social distancing does not mean that you have to be or feel alone. Find ways to connect with friends, colleagues, and family using technology. It is especially helpful to connect with the people in your life who are coping well and have a good outlook. Share how you feel with the safe people in your life. Talking about feelings does not make them grow more powerful, it can actually make them smaller and help you to feel less anxious overall.
3. **Limit media exposure.** Stay informed but don’t overdo it. Just keeping up with emails from OHSU and your program may be all the information you need. Practice making your media consumption inversely proportional to your level of anxiety on any given day. If you are feeling very anxious, take a break from news and social media so your nervous system can quiet down. When you feel a bit more resilient and want to know the latest updates, the news will be there waiting for you.
4. **Keep things in perspective.** Take a deep breath and remind yourself that this crisis will pass in time, and that humans are vastly capable of adapting to challenges.
5. **Make and keep a daily schedule.** It is easy to numb out on the couch with shows and movies, and a day of this here and there is probably helpful. But if you overdo it, you are likely to start to feel worse. If that happens, get organized and make a schedule. Attend to sleep, exercise, cooking and eating well, and scheduled connection with others like it is your job. If you smoke or drink coffee, try to limit your intake, since nicotine and caffeine can increase anxiety and stress.
6. **Avoid using alcohol or drugs.** Drugs and alcohol may temporarily alleviate stress in the short-term, but in the long run they can create additional problems that increase stress and anxiety.
7. **Address one task at a time.** During times of tremendous stress, your normal workload may feel unbearable. Pick one urgent task and work on it, or break large tasks down into smaller pieces. Check projects off one at a time, to help things feel less overwhelming.
8. **Try Mindfulness!** This word gets a lot of hype, and you may or may not have had a successful experience with it. Data does suggest that mindfulness can be a powerful tool for coping with stress and anxiety. If you already have a mindfulness practice, good for you! Make time to practice every day, ideally for 20 minutes or more. If you are new to mindfulness but open to trying, there are many apps that may be helpful, including: Headspace, Calm, and Buddhify. You can also schedule individual mindfulness coaching appointments with SHW’s Wellness Coordinator to start or deepen a mindfulness practice. [View the Student Health website for details.](#)

9. **Be of service.** One way to cope with our own internal struggles is to take the focus off of ourselves and to focus on helping others. Sometimes this is a large act, and sometimes it can be something quite small. Check on a neighbor. Call a loved one. Offer to pick up groceries for someone who is not able to go out. Even these small acts can make a big difference for others, and might help you feel less alone and helpless.
10. **Seek additional help.** Individuals who feel an overwhelming nervousness, a lingering sadness, or other prolonged reactions that adversely affect their job performance or interpersonal relationships should consult with a trained and experienced mental health professional. Student Health are now available virtually and we have a team of mental health providers ready to help you if you are struggling.

Know Your Resources

- **For students and postdoctoral fellows: Student Health & Wellness Center (SHW)**
 - Behavioral health services: individual counseling and medication management; referrals to community providers when needed or preferred
 - Primary care appointments, mindfulness coaching appointments, and wellness programs and resources are also available; see website for details
 - Most services are now available virtually
 - Phone: 503-494-8665, Option 1
 - Website: <https://o2.ohsu.edu/student-central/health-wellness/index.cfm>
- **Multnomah County Mental Health Crisis Line: 503 988-4888**
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-TALK**
- [SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline](#)