MANAGING ANXIETY

Coronavirus Fears & Concerns

Presented by Cigna
Employee Assistance Program
SEMINAR GOALS

• Explore unique aspects and impact of the coronavirus disease
• Learn about recommended responses
• Review normal reactions and strategies for coping with anxiety
• Understand how your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help
Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was declared a public health emergency of international concern on January 30, 2020.

The spread of the disease seems more rapid and widespread than the common illnesses we know or even some other infectious disease outbreaks.

As we learn more about how it could impact core areas of our lives – health, work, daily routines, finances, loved ones – anxiety and fear can grow.
Unique factors impact anxiety
- Threat is unseen and unpredictable
- We can’t exclude ourselves from risk
- This is uncharted territory
- Alarming, 24/7 news cycle

We can’t change these factors, but we can stay informed and work to manage the anxiety they create.
We are hard-wired to react to a sense of threat with a fight/flight/freeze response.

(Berkeley University Health Services, n.d.; Cherry, 2019)
What do we know?

- Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that are known to cause a range of illnesses, including colds.
- COVID-19 symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- It appears to spread mainly via droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- There’s no anti-viral treatment or vaccine at this time. Care involves helping to relieve symptoms.
- Current information indicates that many cases are mild, but the sick and elderly can be hit harder.

(World Health Organization (WHO), 2020b; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC), 2020; Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP), 2020)
RECOMMENDATION: PREPARE, DON’T PANIC

- Practice healthy hygiene precautions
- Practice social distancing. Avoid close contact with sick people
- Talk to your manager or HR about company’s directives and policies
- Have a preparedness plan for a potential quarantine
- Talk about plans with family members
- Follow updates from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), your state/local public health officials

Healthy Hygiene

› Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren’t available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
› Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
› Cough or sneeze into your elbow or cover with a tissue, then throw it in the trash.
› Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces.

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC), 2020; WebMD, 2020)
MANAGING THOUGHTS: CONSIDER REALITIES

• Put your risk in perspective
• Put this disease in context
• Watch out for flawed assumptions
• Remind yourself of the emotional cost of “worst case scenario” thinking

Panic can grow when we focus on the threat and underestimate our ability to cope with it.
MANAGING THOUGHTS: LOOK FOR BALANCE

- Move thoughts to the present
- Focus on what you can control
- Use reminder mantras
- Take a break – change the channel

Strive to be always aware, not always fearful. It’s harder to address true risk when everything seems like a danger.
IF THOUGHTS BECOME OVERWHELMING

- Try a thought-stopping technique
- Use your senses to switch focus
- Offer yourself kind comfort
- Consider professional support
• Allow and name feelings
• Feelings of grief, loss are normal
• Find your soothers
• Offering support to others
• Have realistic expectations

Notice what brings a sense of calm. Perhaps it’s meditation, listening to music, journaling, running, being in nature, calling a friend… what works for you?
USE MIND/BODY CONNECTION

• **Slow, deep breathing** sends calming signals to the brain via vagus nerve

• **Progressive relaxation** releases muscle tension

• **Mental visualization** cues body to respond to imagined calm as if it were real
MOVES YOU CAN MAKE

- Stick to normal routines
- Limit news exposure
- Prioritize self-care
- Connect with others

Reach out to your EAP. We’re here 24/7 to talk through concerns and share resources.
REMEMBER YOUR OWN RESILIENCE

- Think about how you’ve navigated life challenges in the past
- Be prepared
- Stay informed
- Manage anxious thoughts and feelings
- Reach out for help when you need it
BENEFITS OF THE EAP

Benefits vary by employer. Please check with your HR for your specific EAP benefits.

- Face-to-face sessions
- Confidential
- Prepaid
- Unlimited telephonic consultation
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Household benefit
- Work/life support such as elder care, child care and pet care
- Convenience services
- Financial services
- Legal services
REFERENCES


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