

Maintaining an Elevated Mood When the Unexpected Happens

Tips for Decreasing Anxiety and Depression During the COVID-19 Pandemic

It is not possible to simply carry on as normal when something unexpected happens. This is particularly true if the unexpected is an unprecedented pandemic. Here are a few practical tips on how to maintain an elevated mood as everyone of us navigates a new normal:

1. **Listen to the news in manageable portions.** It is important to be informed, but not overwhelmed. Limit over-consumption of the news. I have already had clients report that taking this step is reducing anxiety and panic.
2. **Exercise daily with social distance.** Research shows exercise improves both mental and physical health.
3. **Get Ample Sleep.** Sleep is the period when our body's immune system is most active. Staying up late to binge on Netflix reduces the body's natural opportunity to build immunity.
4. **Reach out to others to prevent loneliness and isolation** – call, text, FaceTime, Zoom, or Skype friends and relatives. Isolation increases stress and depression; fight it by staying connected.
5. **Practice meditation, relaxation, listen to relaxing music, or pray,** listen to worship music, online inspirational podcasts or sermons. What you are setting your mind on will directly impact how you feel and what you do.
6. **Reduce stress in one's life by being extra kind to others.** Thinking of others takes our minds off ourselves and our fears or problems.
7. **Avoid overconsumption of sugar.** Eating whole foods with real nutrients are important for and optimal immune system. Limiting sugar and caffeine, found in medications, coffee, tea, energy & soft drinks, can *decrease* anxiety.
8. **Laugh - watch a funny movie or crack more jokes.** Laughter improves immunity lifts your mood!
9. Stay grounded in the present by focusing on the facts of today. Letting your mind wonder to what could happen and thing you cannot control in the future increases anxiety. Concentrate on what you DO know and not what you can or cannot imagine.
10. **Create a schedule.** Having a routine each day and consistent times to get up, eat, and go to bed can increase a sense of security and confidence that you know what is to come.