

INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS

I'm having a lot of anxiety because of the coronavirus. Please help.

We get it. It's hard to sift through the messages and information coming at us. Worse, the "unknown unknown" (not knowing what you don't even know) can cause even greater anxiety for those of us who are panic-prone.

What you can do

1. Remember that knowledge is power. Understanding the factors that affect person's immune response to COVID-19 will matter as much as, or more than, understanding the virus! Poor lung health caused by smoking, lack of adequate health care, suppressed immune systems, and/or populations particularly susceptible to infectious diseases, such as the elderly, have been particularly affected by COVID-19.

2. Don't accept everything you read or hear. Look beyond rhetoric and arm yourself with information. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides information and frequent updates on the COVID-19's spread, severity, risk assessment, etc. To subscribe to the CDC's email and text message service, visit CDC Subscription Service.

3. Get your emotional support system in place:

- Maintain familiar routines in daily life as much as possible; take care of your basic needs and employ helpful coping strategies: rest during work or between shifts, eat healthy food and engage in physical activity.
- Stay connected with others and maintain your social networks:
 - Have the emails and phone numbers of close friends and family at your fingertips.
 - Stay connected via email, social media, video conference and telephone.
- Find a free online support group (see page 3 for a list of options).
- Reach out to your local NAMI Affiliate or State Organization for information on support programs in your area.
- Visit the NAMI Resource Library, which provides an extensive list of in-person and online support groups, and other mental health resources.
- Contact the SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline (800) 985- 5990 that provides 24/7, 365-day-a- year crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters.
- Have the number of several Warmlines (emotional support hotlines) at your fingertips.
- **Call the NAMI HelpLine at 800-950-NAMI (6264) Monday through Friday, between 10:00 am and 6:00 pm EST for mental health resources.**

4. Take control and incorporate preventative measures

- Wash your hands. See the CDC's list of preventative measures.
- Avoid watching, reading or listening to news reports that cause you to feel anxious or distressed. A near-constant stream of news reports can cause anyone to

feel anxious or distressed. Instead, seek CDC updates and practical guidelines at specific times during the day.

- Be supportive to others. Assisting others in their time of need can benefit the person receiving support as well as the helper.

I'm quarantined or working from home – lonely and isolated even further – what can I do?

5. What you can do while working from home

- To help overcome uncertainty, normality and routine that mirrors life's daily patterns and practices can be helpful. If working from home, we encourage you to create a structured, dedicated work environment and build in self-care as well as daily benchmarks of achievement.
- Structure and routine may be helpful for people with mental health vulnerabilities, especially during times of uncertainty. We encourage you to maintain a regular routine with the work hours that are usually worked, including keeping up with morning rituals. Dressing in regular work attire and taking regular breaks, including lunch time, may also be helpful.
- Research tells us that seven percent of communication is accomplished through our words, including email. 38 percent is voice and a staggering 55 percent is body language and visual. For people with mental health vulnerabilities, and even for those with extroverted personalities, the lack of face time can be challenging. Using technology to simulate this can offer a solution to bridging this gap. Be mindful of opportunities to integrate video into your conversations with colleagues. Consider using the video function on Skype or Teams for internal and external meetings.