



TIPS for Managing Stressful Times related to COVID 19: *Healthcare Workers*

Managing Fear and Anxiety in these Difficult Times

Topic 1: Fear is often linked closely with anxiety. Fear and anxiety can cause a downward spiral that affects mental and physical health, sleep, and relationships. We know that the best way to work with fear is to address it rather than avoid it. One way to begin addressing fear is to acknowledge it and notice how it is impacting you--is your heart racing, muscles tight, stomach churning? Are you quick to anger or lash out at those around you? While being aware of those areas, take a few deep breaths, making the exhale slightly longer than the inhale, inviting those sensations to settle. If you like, you can shift your thoughts to something that gives you a sense of clarity and safety.

Sherri is a nurse working in the pediatric ICU. She's noticed that her anxiety at work has been significant since the COVID-19 threat became real for her institution. This morning, she was assigned her first patient with suspected COVID-19, test results still pending. Sherri noticed her jaw was clenched and her stomach was churning. In recognizing these sensations as signs of fear and anxiety, she paused, took three slow deep breaths and acknowledged the fear. She then worked through the precautions she would take to keep herself safe. In finding a sense of clarity, Sherri thought of her own children, safe at home with her spouse, and with overwhelming compassion for the parents of the child she was about to care for, moved on with her day from a place of calm and clarity rather than fear.

As it relates to covid-19, make sure you stay informed through reputable resources, but don't over indulge in the 24/7 news cycle. If your fears and anxieties begin to feel unmanageable, it can be a very valuable experience to work with a mental health professional. There are many cognitive techniques you can learn quite quickly and easily to work with and manage fear and anxiety in your daily life.



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