

COPING METHODS FOR CORONAVIRUS ANXIETY

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To cite this article: Karayel, A. Hümeýra Kutluođlu. "Coping Methods for Coronavirus Anxiety", INSAMER, 24.03.2020.

 Analysis

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new outbreak that first emerged in Wuhan, China on 31 December 2019 for some unknown reason and spread rapidly. In a short time it has affected many cities of China and soon cases started to shown in other countries like Iran, Italy and South Korea in February. Europe has become a center of Covid-19 by March, taking China's place. After seeing many fatalities and positive cases of COVID-19 in many other countries the World Health Organization (WHO) has stated COVID-19 as a pandemic.

Symptoms come in the form of, among others, fever, dry cough and shortness of breath that show in 2-14 days following virus contraction that put the elderly and those with chronic disease to have the highest risk of being infected. Previously the only mode of transmission was droplet but recently the WHO has announced that the virus to be airborne meaning that the virus is transmitted through the air.

Even prior to any confirmed case in Turkey various precautions and attention have been exhausted in addressing COVID-19. All these efforts spiked following the first positive case on 11 March 2020. Turkey began to impose flight bans nationally and internationally, not to mention closing the country borders. The 14-day self-isolation for people who come from abroad has also been implemented. Yet in spite of all efforts, COVID-19 continues to push into Turkey leading to the unfortunate rising number of cases and fatality.

While some people cope with the pandemic calmly, others cope with anxiety, stress, fear and other psychological disorders because of the exposure to bad news about the coronavirus. Actually, these feelings are understandable due to the global statistics of what the virus can do. COVID-19 has shown to affect those young and old, rich and poor, healthy or sick. The virus evidently spares no group of people. Therefore,



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the level of anxiety, panic and fear start to develop and people have been shown to suffer from symptoms of psychological disorders.

It should be noted that, having these emotions is not harmful or these emotions do not give any harm to people if they are shown in a normal level. Trauma is normal to an extent. However, to have excessive or intensive anxiety, fear, anger or panic in every situation for the simplest thing can be problematic and cause anxiety disorders or depression.

The global public has been exposed to both right and wrong information about the coronavirus and it's effects in these difficult days. Therefore this information pollution can lead to the increasing level of anxiety, stress and fear. Afterwards, the high-level anxiety and stress might cause sleeping problems, eating problems, anger, tiredness, weakened immune system, social isolation and depression. Therefore, the public should acknowledge the coping strategies of anxiety and stress. Also how to quickly minimize the level of these emotions and apply them in a healthy way.

Coping Methods with Anxiety and Stress:

1. Stay clear from information pollution. Following only official accounts and verified information and data about the disease and it's spread. These sources may be the Ministry of Health or the World Health Organization. Changing false, deficient information with the correct ones can minimize the level of anxiety and help people to relax.
2. Following the news constantly and talking about the coronavirus all the time or reading data and writing about it can make people anxious and being overly exposed to bad information may cause hopelessness. Therefore limiting one's self to once or twice official accounts feeding in a day is enough for adults and instead of being glued only to dramatic news, and beneficial information and even comedy can avoid anxiety.

3. Children are also at risk psychologically especially when the adults talk constantly about the Coronavirus they can experience anxiety too. While caring for them, giving true and helpful information, talking with them and listening to their anxieties and fears, playing with them, drawing and spending time together can help to prevent anxiety in children.
4. In general, anxiety and stress harms the immune system, and it also affects the quality of sleep. Healthy nutrition in this matter also plays an important role. If people cannot sleep and eat right, they will become sitting ducks for the Coronavirus as well as other diseases. Especially these days, eating vegetables and fruits, drinking enough water and sleeping sufficiently are helpful techniques to protect anyone's health. Not less importantly, avoiding oneself from smoking cigarette, drugs and harmful habits can help prevent diseases.
5. Sports also increase body resistance, helps decrease bodily tension, and improves relaxation. The good thing is people don't even have to go out to exercise. Everyone can exercise easily in the comfort of their homes to boost metabolism and immune system; now we can and stay healthy by downloading exercise applications to our smart phones.
6. Giving importance to self-hygiene to prevent the spreading of the virus but not exaggerating cleaning is necessary and relaxing from psychological perspective. Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20-30 seconds especially after you have been in a public, crowded place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing are important steps to protect yourself from viruses. If you cannot find soap and water, you can use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol and cologne. If you are sick, wear a facemask. Also avoiding from touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands, eating delivery food or from outside and making close contact

with other people, going outside if it is not necessary are required. Giving importance to house sanitation, to make sure the rooms are ventilated, cleaning clothes and pets are necessary protection techniques in these days. It should be noted that, to suppress and prevent the COVID-19 as much as possible is vital. However, while being careful about cleaning, people should not go to the extremes and make clean all the time. This is important for the psychological wellbeing.

7. Many people are staying home in these days. This time should not be considered as a holiday. We should consider it as the opportunity to complete unfinished jobs. There are many healthy and efficient ways to spend this solitaire period such as reading books, watching documentary of documentary telecasts, doing daily routines, following useful accounts on social media, drawing, playing a long-forgotten instrument, learning new hobbies and so on. These are all helpful relaxation techniques to drive away negative emotions and thoughts.

8. After all you apply these techniques and still cannot control your anxiety then you can start to apply controlled breathing relaxation exercises.

9. When you feel anxious and stressful, progressive muscle relaxation can help people to gradually release tension in the muscles and level of anxiety. There are some techniques on how you can relax your muscles and here this is one of them:

- Sit in a quiet and comfortable place and wear comfortable clothes. If there is music, play it. After that, close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Inhale from your nose and exhale from your mouth slowly.
- Using the imagination of lovely or safe places can help to relax in this process.
- After that, you will be working with almost all the major muscle groups in your body. You can start to tighten and relax your feet

for 5-10 seconds and systematically move up to your right-left calves, stomach, chest, back, right-left hands, neck, shoulders, and lastly tighten and relax your face.

10. After tighten and relaxation of each muscle, inhale and continue with the next muscle. Or if you prefer, you can also do this breathing exercise:

- Sit or lie flat in a comfortable position and if there is music, let it play.
- Then, put one hand on your stomach just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose for 3 seconds, and let your stomach push your hand out. Your chest should not move and keep it in its position for 3 seconds. Breathe out for 3 seconds through pursed lips as if you were whistling.
- Do this breathing exercises 3 to 5 times.
- There are many benefits when this controlled breathing exercises is practiced in a correct way. It helps control blood pressure, gives physical and psychological relaxation; helps to regulate sleeping pattern and the digestion system. It also decreases stress and anxiety.

11. Thinking about the pandemic crisis, risks factors and reading disaster stories all the time and exaggerating them can cause psychological problems. Therefore, focus more on controllable sides of events and think more about the powerful sides of yourself when you feel you cannot control anything. Use your imaginative power and creative side to regulate your emotions. Try to find alternative explanations to reduce your anxiety about stressful events. Substitute your negative thoughts and cognitive distortion with a positive one.

12. Belief system and social support are also useful techniques to reduce anxiety and stress in these unfortunate times. If you can think that these events is a test from the

Almighty, take appropriate precautions and then put the rest in God's hands, you will feel more calm.

13. Furthermore, the term of social distancing is not the same with the term lack of social contact. Social support is also a good element to protect you from anxiety. Talking with your loved one, chatting and spending enjoyable times through technological devices are still possible to do.
14. After all these coping methods and protective techniques from anxiety, if you cannot control your stress level and in fact it's increasing, then you should consider to seek professional help. You can make an appointment online and join therapy sessions.

It should be noted that, everything that you go through is a process and this too will pass. In these days, anxiety, stress, fear and sadness is

very normal now that the whole world is facing a traumatic event. The most important thing is that, feeling these emotions will not make you a bad person. What to avoid is making them excessive and maladaptive. In addition, intensive and constant anxiety gives harm to the physical and psychological unity of people and become cause to other disorders. Therefore after traumatic events, giving meaning to events and focusing on the emotions felt, as well as treating problems play an important role. Controlled breathing exercises, relaxation exercises, cognitive restructuring, sports, arts, your social environment and belief system are supportive techniques to relaxation. Yes, this is a difficult process and it will pass and when it has passed all these events, good or bad, will be a valuable experience for all of us. To make the best out these experiences, all of us together must do the precautions recommended to us by the right people, leave the rest in God's hand, wait patiently, and stay at home.

