

MANAGING STRESS & ANXIETY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Sometimes everyday life causes undue stress and anxiety. There may be feelings of uncertainty about the future or dread that sweeps over you. You may be feeling that same type of anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are hundreds of stressors that can stir the emotions and start anxious thoughts, sending you into distress. Signals of stress and anxiety overload include changes in sleep or eating patterns, difficulty sleeping or concentrating and increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

It's important to learn how to manage your own anxiety so that you can help others in your family manage theirs. Here are some tips that can help you cope with stress and anxiety more effectively:

- **Modify your daily activities** to meet the current reality of your situation. Focus on what you can do instead of what you can't do.
- **Celebrate small victories**, whether they are yours or your children's victories.
- **Build up compassion** for yourself and others. Replace any self-defeating statements with positive, encouraging thoughts to boost your mood.
- **Learn and practice calming techniques.** Take a warm bath or cuddle up with your pet. Try deep breathing. You want to use abdominal — or deep belly — breathing to promote a sense of calm.
- **Practice mindfulness and meditation.** Mindfulness focuses on simply being still and in the moment. Focus on your breath and watch your thoughts go by in your mind. Acknowledge them and then let them float by while staying in the moment.
- **Make time for yourself.** Do what you love. Listen to music, watch your favorite movie, bake cookies.
- **Move your body.** Any type of movement or exercise can help calm your body and make you feel more relaxed. A relaxed body helps to relax the mind.
- **Limit the amount of news coverage you watch.** Take breaks from the news and from social media. Spend that time reading a book, taking a walk or doing something fun.
- **Be sure to laugh.** Laughter helps you to relieve tension and tune into the humorous side of life.
- **Connect with others.** Call a friend or relative that you trust and have a meaningful conversation about how you are feeling.

Sourced from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Centers for Disease Control

