

Trauma Awareness

because recovery from trauma is possible

Managing Anxiety in Uncertain Times

How do we reduce or manage anxiety during this time when so much is out of our control?

During our current situation, there is much more anxiety in dealing with many factors that are both unknown and uncertain. Although anxiety is common when we have less control or have fears of illnesses, there are also some things we can do to manage our responses and how it impacts us. Anxiety can result from fears of a real or imagined threat and in the current pandemic situation, there is not only concern around illnesses and consequences, there are financial stressors and potentially conflict in relationships that may increase as a result of other stressors. Although there are many of these factors that are not in our control, there are some things that we can do.

The first strategy includes reducing exposure to news or information that may increase anxiety. Many people are going to social media for information or discussion, but this can also contribute to furthering anxiety.

The second strategy includes finding ways to keep active. Normal routines may be disrupted due to closure of facilities (pools, gyms, clubs), but it continues to be important to participate in physical activity such as home workouts, use resources such as youtube, and internet. Whenever possible, try to include outside activities such as walking.

Participating in regulating activities such as mindfulness, intentional focused breathing, guided meditation is known to be very helpful with anxiety. There are a multitude of apps and resources that can be helpful with this. Try a number of them and see which one you like the most!

Helping with children

Children look to us to figure out how to respond. Therefore, it is critical that we take care of ourselves. If we are anxious, our children are very likely to develop an anxious response. So - we really do need to take care of ourselves - that will help our kids! The following are some activity ideas:

Game nights (great way to connect with family, spend time together)

Reading

Trying new things (cooking, crafts)

Projects - what creative ideas can you come up with?

Can anxiety become a problem?

It is normal to experience anxiety - especially in these difficult times. It is also important to note that we need to take action to mitigate anxiety as it can become a larger problem. Anxiety can lead to a number of problems (not limited to) sleep difficulties, concentration problems, mood irritability, reduced capacity to manage emotions or solve simple problems, increase in somatic symptoms (things we feel in our body - such as headaches, stomach aches), nightmares, changes in eating patterns, increase of avoidance (which can also increase anxiety). Prolonged exposure to stress can also create trauma like symptoms.

What is Trauma?

There are several definitions of trauma - The definition I use is broader to encompass the experiences of trauma and abuse that are often missed in diagnostic definitions. ***An actual or perceived event or experience that compromises one's physical, mental, spiritual or emotional sense of security. A traumatic experience may include a number of emotions (fear, hopelessness, horror, confusion, helplessness) and a wide variance of intensity level. A number of protective and risk factors***

along with the type of trauma, intensity of risk, and emotion around the event will influence the response one may have to an event or experience.

Did you Know ...

Anxiety is very common?

Here are a couple of my favourite resources:

Here's a great App - Mindshift This app has numerous tools to help one manage symptoms of anxiety including information, guided meditation "chill out tools", breathing tools, symptom check list and cognitive strategies. This is a free app, and an upgraded version is available for a fee. However, the free version has plenty available and

More App suggestions:

- Headspace
- Moodpath
- Clear Fear
- Sanvello
- Breeth
- 7 Cups

ABOUT ME

Throughout my work I have developed a strong passion around the area of trauma and vicarious trauma. I have worked in the field of Addiction and Mental Health in a variety of roles for 18 years, teaching a sessional class on Trauma and Healing at the University of Lethbridge for several years, along with being in private practice since 2011. I have also had the wonderful opportunity to instruct numerous workshops to a variety of professionals from one hour to two days. I continue to care for myself and my passion in this area through learning and indulging in my curiosity.

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