

RESILIENCY & MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS QUICK TIPS #2

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Resiliency & Mental Health Wellness Quick Tips #2

Each week, we will present an article here that will discuss a key component of resiliency, positive psychology, and mental health wellness!

The articles will briefly present a new topic, provide a skill and/or exercise to try, and will often include other available resources.

We hope that you find this material helpful and work to apply these concepts in your life.



ANXIETY – WHAT IS IT?

We experience anxiety when we think something bad or threatening could happen. This fear triggers a physiological response in us that creates fight-or-flight sensations (e.g., physical tension, chest pain, rapid/irregular breathing, sweating, the feeling of a need to escape or restlessness). This is what we feel as anxiety.

-This is a universal (**Normal**) human experience, each day, to varying degrees.

- **KEY FACT:** Anxiety is meant to keep us safe, not harm us.

- When faced with uncertainty, we can become fearful of unknown outcomes. The key theme here is uncertainty and fear of the unknown – thoughts focused on these areas can generate anxiety.

What is there to be anxious about right now?

- Is anyone feeling a bit more anxious these days? Of course, WE are!
- The COVID-19 virus pandemic is defined by uncertainty
- Does anyone feel like you are super focused on monitoring your sensations and wondering if it is a symptom of COVID-19? Odds are, lots of us. This is uncertainty!
- With COVID-19, we ask anxiety provoking questions like...
 - What if I have it?
 - What if I get it?
 - What if I bring it home to my family?
 - What if my loved ones get it?
 - How long will this last?
 -etc., etc.,.....
- Such questions can go on and on, and most have uncertain answers.

What to Do - Be Aware of the “What If” and Throw a Flag on Your Thoughts

- ✓ Be aware of these two words that only serve to breed more anxiety? **WHAT IF?**
- ✓ As humans, we want control. We crave control. When things are not in our control, we can develop fear and anxiety.
- ✓ When we ask these **What If** questions, we usually do not have an absolute 100% certain answer, so it can start an almost endless cycle of “What Ifing” (clinical term).

What Helps? 4 Strategies to Try

1. Re-focus on things we can control.

- If anxiety is created by uncertainty and our lack of control over uncertain situations, **re-focus on those things that are in our control.**
- Then **let-go** of those things we cannot control and accept that we cannot control them.
- During this COVID-19 pandemic, there are things we can control. We are all aware of strategies to protect ourselves from contracting the virus. This is in our control. Engage in proper hygiene/disinfecting practices, social distancing, and using Personal Protective Equipment in situations when needed.
- If we are doing these things to the best of our ability, that is what we can control. This is all we can control. If you try to exert control over things beyond what is in your immediate control, you will begin the anxiety cycle again. It becomes like hamster on a wheel, difficult to get off. If this happens, (which is natural), it goes back to the same strategy, re-focus on those things that are in our control. Then let-go of those things we cannot control and accept that we cannot control them.
- Try practicing this and even saying it out loud in stressful/anxious moments.

2. Limit Continual Exposure to Negativity and Stressful/Anxiety Provoking News/Information

- To that end, it is important to limit your exposure to sources of information (e.g., repetitive news reports, etc.) that only serve to increase fear, anxiety, and uncertainty.
- While it is important to have facts and stay informed, repeated negative and anxiety provoking information can increase stress and anxiety in many people. Limit this input in your life and disengage from it when you can.

What Helps? 4 Strategies to Try (Con't)

3. Spend More Time on Creating Positive Emotion

- Remember Quick Tips#1 discussion on taking positive perspective, focusing on what is good and having gratitude about those good things in our lives?
- Well this becomes an area to go back to when disengaging from the news/media often focused on the negative.
- Seek out positive information from friends, family members, kids, etc. Ask about your nieces, nephews, grandkids. Ask for videos. Connect via FaceTime or a group meeting application.
- Create positive experiences

4. Putting Things in Perspective

When spiraling down with negative thoughts leading toward expecting a catastrophe, do the following.

1. Describe the situation/fear. What am I afraid of happening? (Only one thing at a time)
2. What is/are the worst thing(s) that could happen?
3. What is/are your best thing(s) that could happen?
4. What is/are the MOST LIKELY thing(s) to happen (based on facts).
5. Make a plan for dealing with the most likely thing(s) to happen.

RESOURCES:

Breathing Exercises:

Breathing Exercise Variation – Try this Video on Box-Breathing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJJazKtH_9I