

STRESS MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

People with MG may have concerns about how the coronavirus (COVID-19) may affect them. As we all know, stress can lead to increased MG symptoms. Here are some general guidelines to help in these times. With almost every concern, there are factors that are under your control, and there are other factors over which you have no control at all. Make a list of those factors in two different columns. This may give you a sense of control and a more realistic picture.

Are you worried or stressed? There is a difference and the following guidelines will address both. Worry is common and can lead us to think and problem solve about the things that concern us. Stress is a physical reaction to the challenges that we do not have an immediate response to. Some people feel their heart racing, get a queasy stomach, headaches and so forth. If you do have physical symptoms along with your worries or concerns, it is important to include some type of relaxation technique that "resets" the sympathetic nervous system. As is always the case, it is best if you individualize a plan that works for you. Look over the tips below and choose the ones that suit you and your needs.

- Identify the source - naming the actual concern can lead to choices:
 - Can you avoid the stressor? For instance, not going to a large sporting event
 - Can you change your behavior? For instance, learning how to correctly wash your hands
 - Can you change your thinking? Fact check your thoughts - by yourself or with another person you trust - how likely is this to happen?
 - Can you adapt? For instance, can you "attend" a virtual meeting instead of in person?
 - Accept what cannot be changed. This can be difficult at times but can be very helpful.
- Social contact is one of the most helpful buffers for stress
 - It is important to maintain support - for comfort, for fun, as a sounding board
 - Maintain social contact through FaceBook, telephone, texts, virtual Support Groups with friends if you're concerned about physical contact
- Maintain a healthy life style
 - Continue to care for yourself and your loved ones
 - Healthy eating, exercising as tolerated and sleeping well go a LONG way
- Prioritize, organize, manage your time
 - What truly needs to be done? Prioritize what is important
 - Ask for help, delegate what you can, learn to say "no" and learn to let go
- Learn relaxation techniques
 - When we're stressed, our body reacts as though we are facing a physical danger
 - Of all the systems involved in preparing for "fight or flight" we can control our breathing with relative ease - and if we do, all the other systems calm as well
 - There are many sources of relaxation techniques - books, videos, tapes, apps. Find one that appeals to you
 - For a fast way to calm yourself, learn to ground yourself in the present. Use all your senses - exactly what are you seeing, what are you hearing, what are you touching? Name at least 3 things for as many senses as you can
- Make coping cards
 - What has worked for you in the past?
 - Name a specific concern and how you would cope with it
- Distract yourself
 - Listen to music
 - Watch a funny video
 - Take a walk