

THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

CONTROL THE CONTROLLABLE

COVID-19, financial disaster, food shortages... we have been faced with a disaster of global proportions. News and information are at our fingertips 24/7 and it never seems good. Our social supports feel stripped away and you wonder if life will ever be the same. If you had anxiety prior to the coronavirus outbreak, you are probably really struggling. You hear the phrase "You are not alone," but it does little to comfort right now with social isolation, physical distancing, and the loss of human physical touch. It's like being afraid of the dark and trying to find the light switch in a dark room. You call out for help, crying in a panic, fear and anxiety are at their peak. Someone answers! You share that you can't find the light switch and they reply that they can't either. The room is still dark and the light switch could be anywhere. It doesn't feel better knowing that both of you now feel trapped and neither of you is any closer to finding the switch. Maybe this journey isn't about finding the light switch, but rather learning to not be afraid of the dark?

WHAT CAN I CONTROL?

STAY FOCUSED: Don't let your imagination run wild

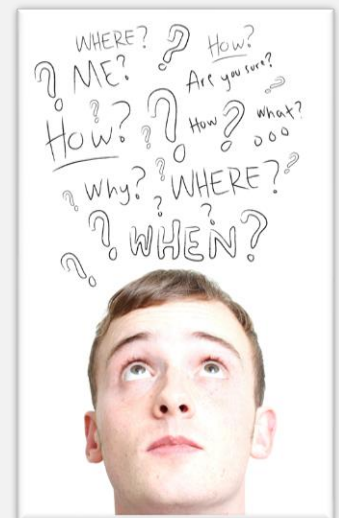
Control is security. Security feels like the antidote to fear. Right now, controlling the flow of global events that we are dealing with is beyond our control. Our minds wander to possible outcomes or worst-case scenarios and we live completely outside of the present moment. How can we feel more at peace with our circumstances? Focus on the present. It may sound small, but it may be the most empowering gift you can give yourself.

Action Step: When you feel yourself in a negativity trap, assuming the worst, STOP. Go outside. Close your eyes. Listen to the birds singing. Breathe in some fresh air. Feel the sun on your face. This is your present moment and this is what exists right here, right now. You are okay. Make yourself available to find peace.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS: Control your consumption of news and social media

Focusing on something other than fear and anxiety isn't easy when news and information are at our fingertips 24/7. Set boundaries for how often you check your newsfeed or listen to the news. While it's important to stay informed, at some point, enough is enough. Become a master of distraction and focus on something other than fear.

Action Step: Read, write, watch old movies, get immersed in a puzzle, or enjoy a daily board game hour. It won't resolve the fear and anxiety, but it will calm it and make coping much easier.



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REMAIN CONNECTED: To your support system

Take care of your emotional and mental wellness by staying connected to the things that matter (and things you can control). Exercise, eating well, proper sleep hygiene, and nurturing our relationships! Even though we can't extend a hug or enjoy pizza and a movie together, a video chat or telephone call can be a great source of support.

Action Step: Do your best to lead a healthy lifestyle. It is one of your greatest supports. Keep the lines of communication open and talk to people you trust about how you're feeling. You may want to connect with a counsellor who can offer some custom-based strategies and coping skills. Schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider if stress, fear, or anxiety get in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row. Don't be afraid to call on whomever you need to at this time. Odds are, they are struggling in some way too.

Remember, you've had a 100% success rate of surviving previous difficult situations. Do your best to control the controllable and practice gratitude and appreciation for the new opportunities that come with great challenges. Never has empathy for ourselves and others been more important. We are all in this together and this too shall pass.

Unsure if you recognize the signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression? Learn more here:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/depression-and-anxiety#signs-and-symptoms>



In crisis?

Connect with your EAP or Primary Health Care Provider. Go to your emergency department, call 911, or contact Crisis Service Canada by calling 1-833-456-4566 toll-free (In QC: 1-866-277-3553), 24/7 or visit www.crisisservicescanada.ca.

Sources: <https://cmha.ca/>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
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