

*Cultivating Calm in Crisis:
Strategies for Living in Uncertain Times*

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IT'S OKAY

TO THINK

THIS IS HARD

COVID-19: Novel Virus; Novel Crisis

- In a crisis, our *nervous system* springs into action giving us a surge of adrenaline, energy, and focus to get through the immediate problem at hand.
- We cannot sustain a state of “high alert”.
- We have to pace ourselves and find effective ways to calm, settle, and restore ourselves.

Definitions

- **Anxiety:** *a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.*
- **Stress:** *a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstance.*

Anxiety is Contagious!

- Emotions communicate to ourselves and others.
- As social creatures, our survival depends on being able to read emotional cues in others so we can respond appropriately and secure our position in the group.
- Anxiety is often experienced in groups.
- Once triggered, it's highly contagious.
- You can do your part to manage the spread.

What's your anxiety response?

- **Over-functioner:** Overly focused on other people's problems to exclusion of self-care. May give advice, micro-manage, fix, rescue, control. Feels resentful, overwhelmed, and exhausted.
- **Under-functioner:** Invites others to take over. May rely on others for advice or decision making, shuts down, zones out, regresses. Feels helpless and incapable.

Practices for Cultivating Calm

- Recognize and acknowledge
- Get some fresh air
- Work up a sweat
- Talk to someone you trust
- Set clear boundaries
- Take a mental step back
- Slow down your breathing
- Take time to rest and recharge
- Plan for transitions
- Put pen to paper

More Calming Practices

- “Soft belly” breathing
- 4-7-8 Breathing (YouTube)
- *Three-Minute Breathing Space (YouTube)*
- Centering Prayer/Meditation
- Yoga (Yoga with Adrienne: YouTube)
- Mindful walking, eating, hand washing
- Listening to soothing music
- Gardening

Myth of Comparative Suffering

- *Comparative suffering*: ranks suffering in terms of who has it the worse AND suggests there is finite amount of empathy and compassion to go around.

EXAMPLES:

“It could be worse, I still have my job.”

“I shouldn't be sad/mad/scared because...”

“I have so much to be grateful for, I should be positive.”

- We compare to avoid our feelings of helplessness and vulnerability, which may give rise to shame.

Self-Compassion and Empathy

Self disclosure



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“Whatever is mentionable is manageable.”

Fred Rogers

Homework

- What are your anxiety triggers?
- Do you tend to over or under-function when stressed?
- Name (3) calming practices that work for you?
Bonus: Identify a new practice you're willing to try this week?
- What have you been avoiding feeling? Bonus: Is there someone you'd like to share this with?

Resources

- All things Daring Greatly author Brene Brown, including “Unlocking Us” podcast and her Ted talks on YouTube.
- The Dance of Intimacy. By Harriet Lerner
- “RAIN” meditation on Tarabrach.com
- “Self compassion break” on Selfcompassion.org
- Qi Gong: *Eight Pieces of Silk Brocade* on YouTube
- Insight Timer: meditation app
- The Dodo: cute animal videos on YouTube ;-)

“RAIN”

- Recognize: Notice what's happening in your body, where your emotions live.
- Allow: Let go of resistance and be with your experience.
- Investigate: “What needs my attention right now?” (NOT cognitive)
- Nurture with Compassion: Offer yourself kindness or care for whatever you are experiencing.

Tarabrach.com: Resources: Rain