

Taking Control in Uncertain Times

If we can name it, feel it, move through it, we can manage it. Just like going to the airport is forever changed since 9/11, the world is changed. We are experiencing “collective grief”. A loss of normalcy, fear of economic toll & loss of connection. This is along with “anticipatory grief”, which pertains to uncertainty about the future: “When will this end?”

Grief leads to physical impacts and a racing mind. As contagious as the virus is, fear spreads as easily. However, so does hope. Stages of grief we may be experiencing.

Denial: The virus won't affect us

Anger: I have to social distance and miss special events & people I love.

Bargaining: OK if we do this for a few weeks, everything will be OK-back to normal.

Sadness: When will this end?

Acceptance: This is real. How do we proceed? Acceptance leads to power. We can wash our hands, social distance, work remotely, limit trips to the store and post office, practice gratitude for life's little things (like more time with your family), stay informed on developments and information to continue to make safe & healthy choices.

Ways to cope with the grief & anxiety, which is the brain's normal way of protecting us.

Relax: us relaxation to quiet the mind & reengage the prefrontal cortex.

Clam breathing, (breath in through nose-4 count; hold & out through mouth- 8 count). This lowers cortisol within 1 minute.

Stretch; do wall pushes; do jumping jacks; run in place; drink water.

Orient: Anxiety is worry about the future. So, orient to time & place in the NOW: 5 things you see; 4 things you can touch; 3 things you can hear; 2 things you can smell; 1 thing you can taste.

Attune: Tune into your needs of the moment. Use positive self-talk; I can cope; This is temporary; This is difficult-it's OK to feel up-set; Feelings are like clouds they come & go & change constantly. I will _____ to help myself feel better.

Release Resistance:

By acknowledging our thoughts & feelings, we can let go of what we cannot control. Allow yourself a set time to visit your worst scenarios and counter it with the best scenario. Do this as a writing exercise.

For example:

Say to yourself, "This is only a thought"; it is not fact.

Write worst vs best scenarios.

Everyone will die vs. The world continues with few deaths because we are practicing more prevention.

I am failing vs. I am struggling; but I can name a success situation for myself.

Observe our emotions and name them. This allows us to gain perspective over the feeling and allows us to know feelings come & go.

Look for ways to make things a little better. We are social beings and need to feel connected, a sense of unity. How can I make today a little better for someone? This is a choice we can control for ourselves.

Bibliography

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