



**American
Autoimmune**

Related Diseases Association, Inc.

Coronavirus Coping Q&A



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1- Everywhere I look in the news I see panic and it increases my own fears – what can I do? How do I deal?

It is understandable that anxiety increases when it seems that everything you see on the news has to do with the coronavirus. Here are a few suggestions: limit the time you spend during the day getting your news; rather than watching the news on television, try to get your news online-- in this way you can select those headlines that you want to read more about; and consider selecting a designated family member to review the news and to share anything of note with you so you're not inundated.

2- What are some basic coping techniques I can practice at home?

Relaxation techniques are always helpful. Not only can they diminish the anxiety you feel about the coronavirus crisis, but they will help to reduce anxiety in general. This can help you in a number of ways, not the least being to help with pain or other symptoms. Schedule times to work on your relaxation techniques. Don't wait until you "feel like it" because that increases the likelihood that it won't happen! Also, work on your thinking. That's something you can improve. There are plenty of negative thoughts occurring because of the coronavirus crisis, such as worrying about being more vulnerable, or not getting your medications. Work on those negative thoughts– focus on more realistic, positive responses about what you can do rather than the bad things that may (or may not!) happen.

3- How do I talk about coronavirus and its risks with my young child?

As with anything else that might be scary to a young child, provide information solely on a need-to-know basis. You don't need to give lots of details. You can use such tidbits as, "Right now, we're just not going out as much as we normally would," or, "There are a lot of people who are sick outside so we are going to stay inside so we can stay healthy." If somebody in your family does get the coronavirus, again you'll provide only the most basic of information necessary. Young children don't understand the difference between a regular cold or flu and the coronavirus, so your conversation can focus on what is necessary in terms of medication, other treatment, rest, etc., as with any other illness. And, a final reminder, be calm and in control when you talk with your child.

4- How do I emphasize the dangers of the virus to my teenager especially if their friends aren't taking it seriously?

You may need to use something like the old standby, "If your friend jumped off the roof does that mean that you should too?" Try to impress upon your teenager that there's a right and wrong way of practicing social distancing and self-care. Even though your teenager may be dismissive, you will have confidence that they'll do the right thing. This does need to be a calm conversation, though, at a neutral time (as opposed to trying to grab your fleeing teen as they are walking out the door). If necessary, because your teen seems to be disregarding proper standards of current self-care, you should try to use outside resources such as online articles or expert opinions, rather than yourself to get your points across.

5- How do I help my child transition from classroom to online learning?

Many children, young and old, are used to playing games online. This may smooth the transition to online learning. Teachers are doing an incredible job of trying to make online learning interesting and appealing for students at home. However, for younger children, less experienced with the discipline necessary to participate, it would probably be helpful for you to attend a lesson right along with your child. Help them learn what to do and accomplish what's asked of them. If you encounter difficulties. or have additional questions or concerns, you may want to speak to your child's teacher about better ways of transitioning.

6- How do I cope with the worry of family/friends living in virus hotspots?

This is difficult because it's understandable to feel anxious because of helplessness. So if you find yourself worrying, keep asking yourself if there's anything that you can do about it? If the answer is no, try to put your worries "in a box," and focus on other things. Yes, you know periodically they will come out and affect you, but you want to avoid giving in to prolonged worry about something that's out of your control. It can be helpful to be in touch more frequently with loved ones in hot spots. Make sure that they are monitoring their own symptoms and know they can reach out to you if necessary.

7- I'm beginning to get cabin fever—how can I feel happier during this confinement?

We always feel better when we accomplish something. Being confined at home can make that more difficult. However, there are always plenty of things that we can do. Help yourself by making a list of the things that you'd like to accomplish, especially things that you wouldn't normally have time to address. Your list can include chores as well as fun activities. In addition, try to schedule specific times for these activities. This works better than just waiting to see if you feel up to it.

8- How do I find common ground with friends/family who only want to politicize the virus?

Dealing with politicizing can make the whole virus situation even more unpleasant. One way to try to deal with this is to suggest a compromise. You'll acknowledge that you're not going to stop people from politicizing the virus; however, you can request that only a certain (small!) amount of time be devoted to it before changing the subject. As with any type of disagreements, the goal is to come up with a win-win solution.

9- For those of us with chronic coughs or allergy symptoms, how do we deal with the stigma of outward symptoms when in public?

Unfortunately, people are going to look at you with suspicion if you cough or show other allergic symptoms when you're out in public. (And that might be an understatement!) All you can do is express immediately that you're not sick, these are allergies and they have nothing to worry about from you. However, keep in mind that there may be people who avoid you anyway or question why you're not wearing a mask, even if it's from allergies. There isn't much that you can do about people who don't understand or people who give you a hard time. Try not to take it personally; even though any attack may seem personal. Remind yourself that they're scared too. All you can do is be calm, (hopefully) understanding, and reasonable!

10- I am worried that the stress of everything that's going on may exacerbate my symptoms. What can I do about this?

You know that stress can be one of the risk factors for possible exacerbations. Therefore, it is important to keep your stress level down because at least this is something that is more within your control. Recognize that it's normal for anxiety-inducing thoughts to pop into your head periodically. (It's sort of hard to avoid during this time!) But recognize that your stress reaction is because of negative thoughts, so it's important to address your thoughts more realistically (and more positively!). In addition, use relaxation techniques to keep your tension lower, distract yourself by doing other things, or, in short, use any of the normal stress management strategies that you have found helpful in other difficult times.

April 2020