



B.R.E.A.T.H.E.: How to Survive Rising COVID-19-Related Anxiety Levels

Camarillo, Calif. (April 21, 2020)—According to a just released [survey](#) by USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR), anxiety linked to COVID-19-related issues is on the rise. Thirty-nine percent of those surveyed nationally experienced symptoms of anxiety and depression, up from 30 percent since mid-March. Worries over job loss, running out of money and contracting COVID-19 are all increasing. Results of a [Kaiser Family Foundation survey](#) found similar results.

"When our brain is hijacked by so many strong emotions, it may seem that there is nothing we can do to calm the anxiety," says Noelle C. Nelson, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist, consultant and author of over a dozen best-selling books including [The Power of Appreciation](#) and [Happy Healthy...Dead](#). Nelson suggests that when anxiety begins to build, follow her B.R.E.A.T.H.E. guidelines.

Breathe. Whenever stress creeps up, take three slow, deliberate, deep breaths. Focus only on your breathing. "You will interrupt the pattern of panic or fearful emotions just long enough to calm down and get your normal thinking brain in gear," says Nelson. "Deep breathing naturally relaxes our heartbeat and steadies us."

Reclaim Your Relationships. Reclaim your relationships with your family and friends. "If you're with your kids at home, see it as a positive even if they're loud and demanding sometimes," explains Nelson. "Appreciate this 'forced togetherness' and view it as a unique opportunity to grow close. Make the effort to connect with extended family and friends. We can often let these relationships slip when we are caught up in an emotional maelstrom."

Express Your Emotions. Find a safe person, someone you can trust with your emotional life. "Finding such a person and regularly interacting with them is a critical way of regaining your sense of worth and easing anxiety," says Nelson. "Also consider writing your thoughts in a journal. It can be cathartic since you're no longer holding your feelings inside."

Aim Your Focus. Rehashing troubles endlessly only succeeds in making us more anxious, more stressed, more out of control. When you find yourself drifting into useless rumination or questioning, stay focused in the present, in the here and now.

Transform Negative Thoughts. Closely related to aiming our focus is transforming negative thoughts. Be alert to when your thoughts veer into negative thinking. Reframe them into statements that are more positive. "Look for solutions, be proactive," says Nelson. "Above all, you have to be sincere."

Heal Your Body. Pay attention to the physical manifestations of anxiety. Stick with a healthy routine.

Don't overeat or over drink. Don't let the refrigerator or the drinks cabinet be your "go-to" when really you're simply bored," says Nelson. "Make sure you are getting enough sleep, since good sleep is one of the body's best restorative tools. Given that sleep can be difficult when you're stressed, consider using one of the calming meditations readily available online, usually free, to help lull you into sleep. Get rid of your anxious thoughts before you turn the lights out: toss them into an imaginary wastebasket. Follow up with jotting down everything you were grateful for that day. Then, let those be the thoughts you carry with you into slumber."

Exercise. Don't make the excuse of not exercising because exercise options are no longer available. Exercise at home--even it if means going to the gym via a YouTube exercise video. "Exercise is not only good for your body, it releases endorphins that help you get into a more positive frame of mind," says Nelson.

For more anxiety-reducing suggestions, go to www.NoelleNelson.com.

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