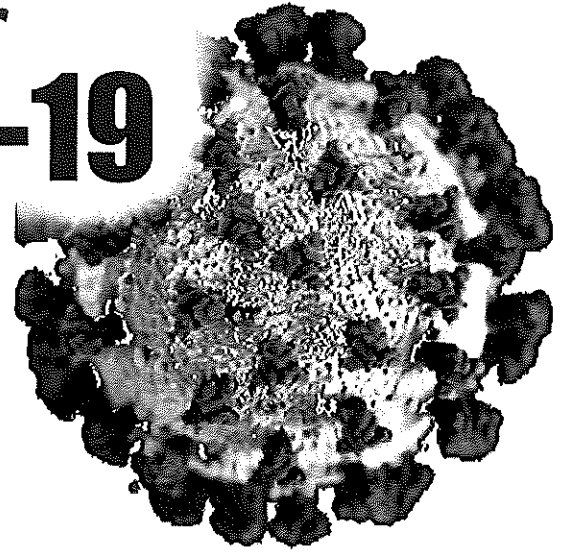# Stay Calm & Reduce Fear During the COVID-19 Pandemic

With coronavirus (COVID-19) now a global pandemic, anxiety and stress levels may be higher than normal for many people. If you already struggle with mental health problems, you may worry about the impact of COVID-19 on your condition. Here's what you need to know about COVID-19 and mental health, and how to keep yourself calm during the outbreak.

Why COVID-19 is tough on your mental health

There's so much uncertainty around what's going to happen with COVID-19 that people are understandably feeling anxious. Jobs may be at risk, elderly family members are vulnerable, and many of us are now forced to change our daily routines. What's more, we're constantly flooded with news, statistics, and fresh emergency guidelines, and it's mentally draining for everyone. So, how do we combat all this stress and stay calm?

1: Practice self-care

With so much beyond our control right now, focus on what you can control. Get more sleep, read a new book, have a warm bath, or take a walk somewhere quiet – whatever you do, now is the time to prioritize your well-being.

2: Limit social media use

Set limits on how often you use social media, especially if you're at home where it's tempting to check in more often. Don't let a constant stream of tweets, status updates, and conflicting opinions overwhelm you.

3: Read only reliable news sources

Stay informed by reading only reliable sources, such as government websites, the WHO, and the CDC. Other news sources may be less accurate, and they may cause feelings of panic and concern.

4: Talk it out

Acknowledge any stress or anxiety you're feeling right now, and ask others how they're coping. Talk to family and friends, and make sure you check in with how your kids are feeling.

5: Reach out to coworkers

Now is the time for coworkers to come together. Focus on maintaining positive morale at work, and if you're working remotely, set regular meetings.

Handling self-isolation and quarantine

If you're showing flu-like symptoms, working remotely, or simply self-isolating, here are some specific tips to get your through the next few weeks and months.

1: Maintain your routine

It's important to maintain a sense of normalcy, where possible. If you're working remotely, check in with coworkers, and try to stick to a typical daily routine. You never know – you might even be more productive than usual!

2: Stay in touch where possible

Whether you use video chats, emails, or voice calls, check in with family, friends, and colleagues regularly. Send each other gifs, have virtual movie nights, and keep your spirits up.

3: Ask for help

If you're feeling lonely, or you need help getting supplies during the isolation period, reach out to coworkers and your local community. You'd be surprised how many people are willing to help at a challenging time like this.

4: Look after your body

Don't neglect your body just because you're stuck at home. Try out meditation, yoga, or other at-home workouts, and eat nutritious meals – your body needs all the support it can get right now.

Conclusion and Using the EAP

Everyone reacts to stressful situations and changing circumstances differently, and it's natural to feel overwhelmed right now. Your employee assistance programs is a go-to source for help and support. Keep them in "top-of-mind" for when the going gets tough with any life concern.

Take care of yourself, your family, your friends, and your coworkers, and don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it. Remember, we're all in this together – stay connected to those around you, focus on what you can control, and don't allow yourself to burn out.

Key Resource: Coronavirus.gov