

COVID-19 HANDOUT: CHOICES YOU CAN MAKE TO STAY EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY

Pay Attention to Your Body and Your Emotions

It's natural to experience stress and anxiety in the face of a threat we cannot control. Because every person reacts differently, notice what your body and emotions are telling you:

- Listen to your emotions, noticing any anxiety, sadness, anger, or detachment;
- Listen to your body, noticing any change in appetite, new aches and pains, or feeling particularly hot or cool; and,
- When you notice troubling symptoms, pause to care for your body and mind. If you become unable to manage or function well, seek the assistance of a professional.

Embrace Best Health Practices

Though there's much about the COVID-19 outbreak over which you have no control, you can choose to embrace the kinds of practices that will keep you and your loved ones safe. The Center for Disease Control suggests:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Access Reliable Resources

You can choose how you will receive and consume information about the outbreak. If you rely on panicked phone calls from your anxious loved ones, you're likely to suffer more than if you choose to rely on credible sources. Two reliable sources for health news include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization. Also, if you become consumed by breaking news about the spread of COVID-19, you can also choose to step away from media reports for a time.

Share Reliable Information

Another way to care for yourself is to care for others by sharing the best information you've discovered. When you find a reputable resource that's particularly helpful, share it with a loved one. When you learn about practices that keep people safe, let a relative who is vulnerable to illness know. In a culture where people are feeling anxious, you can be a gift to others.

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Practice Self-Care

In the midst of a stressful season or situation, many self-care practices are the same ones that prove helpful in everyday living:

- Maintain your normal routines.
- Connect with family and friends.
- Eat well.
- Stay active.
- Get adequate rest.
- Do enjoyable activities.
- Employ coping skills that nurture your spirit, like mindfulness exercises or prayer.

Support Each Other

We aren't created to go through extreme stress alone, so this is also a time as part of God's family to care for each other. Here are two questions to keep asking yourself:

- What opportunities do I have to help others?
- What is overwhelming right now that I should ask someone for help with?

While it feels like there is a lot we can't control amidst concerns over COVID-19, every one of us can make choices to stay emotionally healthy.

³This section adapted with permission from M. Starbuck. (2020, March 3). How to Stay Emotionally Healthy During the Coronavirus Outbreak [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hope-resilience/202003/how-stay-emotionally-healthy-during-the-COVID-19-outbreak>