

Practice Quick De-Stressors. There are many evidence-based techniques for creating a calmer, more relaxed state. This includes paced breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, grounding, visualization, mindful attending to thoughts and feelings, expressive arts, and relaxing hobbies such as gardening or play. Adding these de-stressors in your schedule can make a huge difference in one's felt stress and anxiety levels.

Stay Connected. Community and social support is protective of well-being. And while we need to socialize now in physically distant ways, it doesn't mean the quality of our relationships should change. Talk to friends, family, and loved ones. Find safe activities to engage in. And more importantly, reach out when you feel you are not okay and could use support.

Upskill. Stress can also be lessened by practicing skills related to work and people management, as well as problem-solving. This can include time management, work effectiveness skills, assertive communication, managing up, delegation, and setting boundaries between work and life. There are many practices you can add in your stress management toolkit, suited to the nature of your work and your working style.

Seek Professional Help. If you feel that you could use extra support for your stress and anxiety, consult a mental health professional. Counseling and pharmacotherapy can help in managing symptoms, but also in challenging you to make concrete lifestyle changes for your over-all health. Consultation is especially recommended if you are experiencing distress disproportionate to your stressor, have difficulty performing your work or life, or are experiencing panic attacks, depressive episodes, and other symptoms that concern you.

"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes --- including you."

--- Anne Lamott

childfampossibilities.com, cpps.work
fb.com/childfampossibilities
fb.com/cppswork

http://



Message us:
kumusta@childfampossibilities.com
info@cpps.work



CPPSWORK
MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE



Managing Stress and Anxiety During Pandemic

We are all normal people in an abnormal situation, but there are routines and habits we can do to help.

We all experience stress and anxiety to a degree.

Stress, after all, is the body's normal response to changes inside our body and changes in our environment. In a way you can even say that stress is an indication of being alive! We get stressed because we are trying to hit deliverables, deal with different people, and execute our normal bodily functions.

Similarly, anxiety is a normal emotional response to that which is uncertain and potentially dangerous. Like stress, it is part of the body's normal fight-or-flight response: an instinct that gears our body for action in order to survive. Anxiety helps prepare our bodies for threat, and prepares us to react quickly during times of emergencies.

A moderate amount of stress and anxiety can be beneficial. It helps motivate, engage, and keep us on top of what we're doing. But like most things, too much can be debilitating --- as well as threatening to our physical and mental health.

STRESS AND ANXIETY DURING PANDEMIC

The ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, as well as its consequent stressors (lockdowns, transition to alternative work arrangements, loss of business, threat of infection, virus mutation, political responses to the situation, children navigating remote learning situations, returning to work onsite etc.) brought stress and anxiety that is more than the normal.

The pandemic made stress and anxiety also last for a long time. COVID has been with us now close to two years, and the exact end point is not in sight. Some of us don't just have high stress but we have chronic and compounding stress. It is important to take care of ourselves as of this time, to prevent burnout or an anxiety disorder.

KNOW THE SIGNS

Everyone has a "unique stress signature," that is, we experience stress differently. Knowing your stress signature and the symptoms of anxiety can help you recognize and act on them sooner.



Common signs of stress are:

- **Physical Symptoms:** headaches and body aches, gastro-intestinal upset, fatigue, low energy, sleep disturbances, itching, skin breakouts, elevated BP
- **Emotional Symptoms:** irritability, anger outbursts, crying spells, mood swings, constant worry
- **Mental Symptoms:** forgetfulness, lack of focus, loss of creativity, obsessive thinking
- **Behavioral Symptoms:** increase in gambling, emotional eating, emotional shopping, alcohol and other substance use

Anxiety is often symptomized by physical symptoms i.e. pounding heart, elevated BP, sweaty palms, nausea, a general feeling of dread. Racing thoughts, wanting to escape a situation, and heightened alertness are also common. If your anxiety symptoms come all of a sudden, are very intense, and go away in a few minutes, it is possible you are experiencing a panic attack.

TIPS IN MANAGING STRESS AND ANXIETY

Below are some strategies you can use to better manage your stress and anxiety.

Normalize your Emotions. Because the situation is inherently stressful and anxiety-provoking, consider your feelings of overwhelm and worry as normal --- and something that almost everyone else also experience. And yes, even if it has been more than a year, some of us still have constant challenges (e.g. Covid-positive loved ones, loss of work, fear of infection). Avoid judging yourself as weak, or self-diagnosing mental problems.

Examine your thoughts. Our thoughts greatly influence what we feel, and during times of stress and anxiety we may be prone to unhelpful but not factually-based thinking. Take a moment to give your thinking a reality test and transform an unhelpful thought to a healthier. Practice self-compassion in thinking!

Example, instead of thinking "I can't do anything right!", you can nurture the thought "I will do the best that I can, and ask help for those I can't."

Focus on what you can control. The pandemic took our sense of control --- we don't know what will happen next or where the next infection surge will happen. Worrying about things we can't control just consumes our energies needlessly. Instead, focus on what is within your sphere of influence or action.

Focus, for example, on the reasonable precautions you can make, how you can make your work environment at home conducive, or how to socialize within restrictions. Lessen your exposure to distressful news especially those that make you feel more helpless.

Mind your Physical Health. Stress and anxiety are very much physical phenomena, and so approaching them from a biological perspective would be very helpful. Self-care also helps you feel more in control of the situation, especially as you work towards boosting your immunity against the virus.

Get adequate sleep, eat a healthful diet, exercise, get sufficient sunlight (as quarantine restrictions would allow), and minimize coping that creates more problems e.g. excessive alcohol use or gambling.

