



Families First Therapy, LLC

Coping during COVID 19

Based upon the APA training by Dr. Rochelle Frank on 04.23.2020 and her 2014 book.

During a pandemic, our anxiety is adaptive and expected. All-the-more during the COVID pandemic, we thus need more effective coping skills to manage this anxiety and prevent getting overwhelmed by it so we can open up higher brain functions that shut down when we are in survival modes.

- **Let yourself grieve** – validate your emotions
- **Connect to others** (zoom hangouts, Netflix watching, play board games online)
- **Control What we can**
 - Seek constancy – focus on things not changed by the pandemic
 - Photograph / connect with nature – flowers bloom, birds sing, lakes ripple
 - Maintain and restore routines and structure
 - Self as context – sense of self can change depending on our context; engage in activities that remind us that we are still the same people...even though things have changed now
 - Build mastery
 - Learn a new language, art, music, recipes
 - Clean out closets, garage, pantry
 - Practice new coping skills
 - Practice gratitude
 - Health, finances, friends, family, neighbors, pets
 - Help others (donate time, goods, money)
 - Patronize local restaurants / pay service people
 - Random acts of kindness
 - Smile / say hi / say thank you
 - Stay calm and be gentle with social distancing
- **Restore Normalcy (where you can)**
 - Build positives
 - Buy flowers / start a garden
 - New coat of paint
 - Exercise (body combat, nike trainer, youtube)
 - Practice compassion
 - be patient with self and others
 - small “indulgences” (chocolate, small gifts)
 - connect with others
 - call / text a friend

- zoom dinners, drinks / Netflix parties
 - “were in this together”
- Behave calmly
 - Don’t hoard supplies
 - Minimize news binging (reputable sources)
 - Meditate (CALM, HEADSPACE, BREATHE)
- **Practice tolerating distress**
 - Self-soothing with 5 senses
 - Vision, hearing, smell, touch, taste
 - Turning the mind
 - Active commitment to acceptance and change
 - Half-smile
 - TIP body chemistry
 - Temperature extremes (ice dives) – fill bowl of water and ice; plunge face into it; activates PNS to calm body
 - Intense physical exercise
 - Progressive muscle relaxation
 - Paced breathing
 - STOP
 - Stop – freeze the moment, interrupt the ineffective coping
 - Take a step back: let go of triggers; step back from “the story” in your head
 - Observe - Notice without judgment thoughts, feelings, external events
 - Proceed mindfully – what would my wise mind say right now? How can I choose effectiveness?
 - Wise mind ACCEPTS
 - Activities shift attention, downregulate arousal
 - Contributing engages values and increases self-respect
 - Comparing with others reframes pain
 - Emotions opposite to current ones
 - Push away from triggers (literally, mentally)
 - Thoughts of neutrals / positives interrupt chain
 - Sensations interfere with physiological arousal
 - IMPROVE the moment
 - Imagery of safe and relaxing places of coping
 - Meaning of pain shifts to find the positives (lemonade from lemons)
 - Prayer for acceptance
 - Relaxing the body relaxes the mind
 - One painful moment at a time
 - Vacation from life’s responsibilities
 - Encouragement (cheerleading self)
- **Values-based living – who do I want to be? How do I want to live?**
 - Consideration of others
 - Compassionate to self and others

- Helpful and kind
- Grateful and gracious
- Courageous in the wake of pain
- Willingness vs willfulness
- Openness (especially to uncertainty)
- Honesty
- Fun loving and humorous
- Others
- **FACE COVID**
 - Focus on what's in your control – control here and now (let go of past rumination and future worries)
 - Acknowledge thoughts and feelings
 - Come back into the body by engaging with physical sensations (grounding)
 - Engage in what you're doing by being present in the here and now moment
 - Committed action – engage in effective behavior to help yourself and others
 - Open up – practice loving kindness to make room for painful experiences
 - Values – identify your values and let them guide you
 - Identify resources – know how to get help to reduce panic and build mastery
 - Disinfect and distance – follow the CDC guidelines

SOURCES

Frank, R.L. (2020). *The new normal: Coping with uncertainty and mitigating anxiety during these challenging times*. APA continuing education presentation held on April 23, 2020.

Frank, R.L. & Davidson, J. (2014). *The transdiagnostic road map to case formulation and treatment planning*. New Harbinger.