

## COPING WITH COVID-19 FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY

Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Taking care of yourself, your friends and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

### TIPS FOR COPING

- Get up-to-date information from the City of Alexandria at [alexandriava.gov/coronavirus](http://alexandriava.gov/coronavirus)
- Make sure you have access to media but limit excessive exposure. If feeling anxious, consider turning off social media feeds, automatic notifications and updates on COVID-19.
- Understand that people have strong, often complex and sometimes divergent points of view. Respect this and recognize that it is an opportunity to strengthen our commitment to building our community.
- Identify the feelings you are experiencing. Understand that your feelings are normal and talk about them with others.
- Don't isolate yourself. Personal relationships are crucial in maintaining perspective, elevating mood and allowing distraction away from concerns that trouble us. Combat loneliness and keep talking by phone or video chat.
- Stay healthy by sleeping regularly, eating right, avoiding alcohol and other drugs, exercising, relaxing and doing things you enjoy.
- Maintain a routine.
- Remember that people react in different ways.
- Laugh, have fun and let yourself cry.
- Ask for help if it gets to be too much.
- Try not to judge yourself and others.

### NORMAL REACTIONS TO FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY

- Anxiety, increased worry
- Not wanting to be separated from loved ones
- Irritability, anger
- Fatigue, exhaustion
- Sadness, crying
- Changes in appetite
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Inability to concentrate
- Forgetfulness
- Frequent errors
- Difficulty making decisions
- Confusion
- Hyperactivity
- Physical complaints, diarrhea
- Nightmares
- New or increased use of tobacco products, alcohol or other drugs



## DEEP BREATHING

At times of stress and anxiety, shallow breathing or hyperventilation are common. Mindful, regular breathing can reset the normal stress response and prevent or reverse the onset of the unpleasant physical symptoms associated with anxiety.

This is also true for exercise, which can help reduce the excess adrenaline build-up associated with anxiety. It can also give much needed perspective.

To practice deep breathing, take a slow deep breath through your nose to the count of five. Hold your breath for another 5-count then exhale through your mouth for a 5-count.

## ANTI-STRESS STRETCHES

**Finger Fan:** Extend your arms straight out in front of you with palms up. Spread your fingers as far apart as possible and hold for 5 seconds.

**Upper-back Stretch:** Sit up straight with your fingers interlaced behind your head. Keep your shoulders down, lift your chest and bring your elbows back as far as you can. Hold for 10 seconds.

**Ear to Shoulder:** Lower your right ear to your right shoulder and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

**Overhead Reach:** Raise your arms over your head and interlace your fingers with your palms facing up. Keep your shoulders down and stretch upwards. Hold for 20 seconds.

**Knee Pull:** While seated, pull one knee up to your chest as high as possible. Hold with both hands for 10 seconds then repeat with the other knee.

**Waist Bend:** Reach arms overhead with finger interlaced. Keep shoulders down and bend to one side at the waist. Hold for 20 seconds and then repeat on the other side.

**If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others call or text 24/7:**

**PRS CrisisLink Hotline**

**703.527.4077**

or

Text "connect" to

**855-11**

For TTY, please

**Dial 7-1-1**

**Department of Community  
and Human Services  
Emergency Services**

**703.746.3401**

**ALEXANDRIAVA.GOV/CORONAVIRUS**

