

How To Navigate Forward: A Guide For These Challenging Times



This is a mental health wellness guide to be used as a supportive tool to help build resilience to endure COVID-19.

This guide uses the concept created by Dr. Russ Harris, “How to Respond Effectively to the Corona Crisis and author of “The Happiness Trap.” This guide is meant to provide factual information regarding the Coronavirus and assist you to navigate your mental well-being using the coping skills you already have and building up your resiliency to manage potentially stressful events.

‘FACE COVID’ is a set of practical steps for responding effectively to the Corona crisis using the principles of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). Here’s a quick summary of the key steps and in the pages that follow, we’ll explore them all in more depth:

- F** = Focus on what’s in your control
- A** = Acknowledge your thoughts & feelings
- C** = Come back into your body
- E** = Engage in what you’re doing

- C** = Committed action
- O** = Opening up
- V** = Values
- I** = Identify resources
- D** = Disinfect & distance



You can’t control what happens in the future. You can’t control Corona virus itself or the world economy or how your government manages this whole sordid mess. And you can’t magically control your feelings eliminating all that perfectly natural fear and anxiety. But you can control what you do - here and now. And that matters.

Because what you do - here and now - can make a huge difference to yourself, anyone living with you, and a significant difference to the community around you.

F = Focus on What's in Your Control

My Spheres of Influence Worksheet

If you are prone to hypothetical worry (i.e. the *WHAT IF?* thoughts), you may find it helpful to practice noticing these thoughts and then redirecting your attention to things within your control.

Research shows that when we shift our focus to what we can control, we see meaningful and lasting differences in our well-being, health, and performance.

Write down what you have control over inside the circle below. Next, note the things that you cannot control outside of the circle using the table below as inspiration.

WITHIN MY CONTROL	OUTSIDE MY CONTROL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building resilience• Following latest information and advice• Focusing on what is important to me• My nutritional health/diet• My routine• Relaxation• Cultivating connection• Exercising• Seeking and offering support• Voting and activism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Other people's decisions◆ Other people's health◆ The News◆ The government's actions◆ Schools opening or closing◆ The state of the healthcare system◆ Flights, events and holidays being cancelled◆ Traffic◆ Public transportation◆ Aging◆ The weather



A = Acknowledge Your Thoughts & Feelings

Below are basic definitions of emotions that we may be experiencing....(Not a diagnostic definition). When we feel uncertain about a situation our stress response may rise and we may experience physical symptoms too. *Signs of auto-stress may include: chest tightness, feeling like you can't breathe, muscle tension, aches and pains, headaches, difficulty sleeping, restlessness, inability to relax, heart palpitations, and digestive issues. It is important to acknowledge your thoughts and feelings and to learn how to manage your emotions so they will not take a hold of your daily well-being.*

Stress: a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.

Anxiety: a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.

Depression: feelings of severe despondency and dejection.

Grief: the response to loss, particularly to the loss of someone or something that has died to which a bond or affection was formed.

Anger: a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility.

Catastrophizing: an irrational thought many of us have in believing that something is far worse than it actually is.

HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WITH ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION DURING COVID-19

How can I help?

1. Assess for risk of suicide or harm.
2. Listen without judgment.
3. Give reassurance and information.
4. Encourage appropriate professional help.
5. Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

*Information provided in the Mental Health First Aid curriculum.
*Mental Health First Aid is managed, operated, and disseminated by the National Council for Behavioral Health.

USA MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Grief: It's Not Just A Death Thing Mia Fisher, LCSW

There's a lot of grieving going on right now and a good majority of it has little or nothing to do with death. Yes, grief is the expected response when someone we care about passes away but right now, in living in a world full of social isolation, hyper vigilance and extra precautions many people, young and not so young alike find themselves facing varying forms of discomfort, anxiety and sadness that they are finding hard to put words to.

Those feelings are expressions of grief. Grief is not one size fits all and it is not reserved just for death. There is a lot to grieve in a time like this: the loss of a job, the loss of income, the loss of traditions or hobbies, the loss of stability or security in a time of great instability, the loss of the ability to visit with friends or family, to attend events, public activities or religious services, the loss of our freedoms and the sight of an unfettered future. People are grieving many of these instances just as greatly as they would grieve the loss of a loved one.

Applying Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning can be helpful in tackling the collective grief we are all feeling during this time of uncertainty:

1. **Accept the reality** – We have all lost something or someone in this pandemic: A job, go to lunch or to play a sport or game with friends, volunteer, walking the dog. Activities that have been altered by the presence of social distancing. It is important to accept what we cannot change and do what we can. There is power in that acceptance. Say to yourself, "*I can wear a mask.*" "*I can wash my hands.*" "*I can practice safe social distancing when I have to go out.*" "*I can call my friends and family regularly.*" Focus on the things that you *can do* and then *do them*.
2. **Work Through The Pain** – If you find yourself gearing towards the worst case scenario, reroute your thoughts to the best case instead. Let go of what cannot be controlled and focus on what can. It's important to find balance in your thoughts while remaining rooted firmly in the present.
3. **Adjust To A World Without The Deceased** – This can also mean the job, the volunteer time, extra income, traditions, social times, etc. Say to yourself, I may not be able to do this but I *can* do this instead– and then *do* whatever can replace the loss. For example, if you can't visit your children or grandchildren, have virtual meetings online if you're tech savvy – if you're not computer inclined, have them come to your home and visit through the window or storm door. They live far away? Revive letter writing or send them a card. It's not the same as being there in person, but it keeps you *present* with them and vice versa.
4. **Finding an Enduring Connection To Who (Or What) Has Been Lost While Moving Forward Into a New Life** - This too can mean the job, the extra income, visiting, events, traditions, etc. How we did things at one time has now changed. There are masks, there are gloves, there is a six foot span between people in a lot of public places, there is a lot more hand washing than ever before, and there are food and incidental shortages and a shaky economy. This 'new normal' probably feels alien and very uncertain, but we are still able to find points of connection. We must remind ourselves that no matter how drastic this all feels, it is only temporary. It will not last forever. We can still talk to our friends and loved ones. We hopefully have all that we need and if we do not, there are resources to assist us.

Know that it is okay to grieve; it is okay to feel the loss of all that we once held near, dear and normal –
just as it is okay to grieve the loss of a loved one.

It won't be simple, it won't be easy, it won't be fast –
but we *will* get through it one day at a time,
accepting what we cannot change and adapting what we **can**.

C = Come Back into Your Body

When there is too much outside noise, it can be difficult to concentrate and hear our inner voice. Too much information (TMI) such as twenty-four seven, nonstop info about the pandemic can negatively affect us. While it is good to keep abreast of the latest information, especially the ones specific to your area, it may be a bit too much or TMI, the longer we are into this. One way to keep down the outside noise level is to schedule when and what you will watch pertaining to COVID-19. Consider where your source of information is coming from and limit your social media time and responses. You may even consider going “offline” for awhile and work on keeping your mind at a meditative state, calm and reflect on what is important to you, your family, your health and how to adapt to potential changes. Disconnecting can lead to a better, more fulfilling purpose to reconnect with others and yourself. Do something that’s non-tech or low tech: go for a nature walk, go fishing, do some deep breathing exercises, sit outside and listen to nature.



E = Engage in What You are Doing



Daily Quarantine Questions

1. Who am I checking on or connecting with today?
2. What expectations of “normal” am I letting go of today?
3. How am I getting outside today?
4. How am I moving my body today?
5. How am I expressing my creativity today?
6. What type of self-care am I practicing today?
7. What am I grateful for today?

C = Committed Action

REDUCING ANXIETY WITH “THOUGHT CHALLENGING”

Thought challenging is a simple, yet powerful cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) technique for reducing anxiety. Anxiety can lead to unhelpful thinking patterns when the mind is fixating on the threat, the uncertainty and the negativity.

Thought challenging helps by broadening your focus to include the bigger picture.

Below are two thought challenging techniques you can try and keep practicing to discover which works best for you.

The **ABCDE** Technique

Attention: When you feel distressed, **STOP** what you're doing and pay attention to your inner dialogue. What is your mind telling you?

Believe: Do not automatically believe your thoughts!

Challenge: Defuse anxiety by broadening your focus. What's the bigger picture? Is the thought fact or opinion? Would you think differently, if you were calmer?

Discount: Acknowledge that anxiety has been/is dominating your thinking and let the unhelpful thoughts go.

Explore options: What would be helpful to focus on right now? What options do you have available?

The **THINK** Technique

TTrue? - Is this thought 100% true? If not, what are the facts and what is opinion?

HHelpful? - Is paying attention to the thought useful to me or others?

IInspiring? - Does the thought inspire me or does it have the opposite effect?

NNecessary? – Is it important for me to focus on the thought? Is it necessary to act on it?

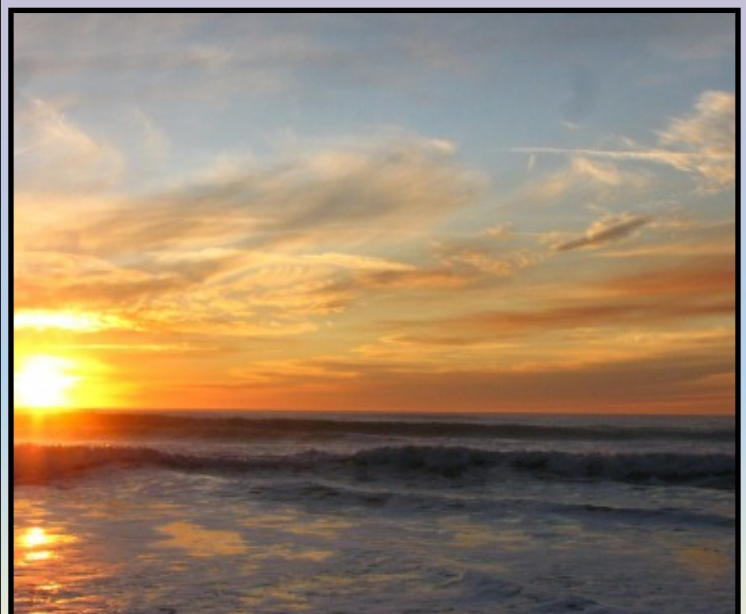
KKind?- Is the thought kind, if not, what would be a kinder thought?

O = Opening Up

Before you reach out to someone to talk about what you are feeling, take the time to focus on what end result you are seeking by opening up to someone. Do you want to talk just to vent and get the built up frustration out or do you want someone to help you organize your thoughts? Here's some help to make the most of your conversation:

1. Create a list of people you prefer to talk to about what you want to share.
2. List what your intent is for sharing your conversation topic.
3. Note there is a give and take. Be willing to listen as much as you want to be heard.
4. Be mindful that whomever you are talking with may also be going through something during this pandemic.
5. Be mindful of the time. Thank the person for their time and let them know if you would like to continue the conversation some other time. Make a schedule and stick to it.
6. Reflect back on the conversation.
7. Keep things in perspective. Remember that you have faced many challenges in life and you have managed to rise above and survive them and you are stronger because of them.
8. Take a deep breathe. This too shall pass.

How do you feel?		
6	Angry! My hands are clutched. My body is tense. My heart is beating fast!	
5	Frustrated My body is tight. My face makes a frown. I don't want to be around others.	
4	Anxious/Scared My shoulders are tense. My stomach feels nervous. I can't turn off my brain.	
3	Disappointed/Sad My shoulders are hunched. My heart aches. Tears fill my eyes.	
2	Calm My body is relaxed and quiet. My brain is focused. I feel good.	
1	Happy! My body is straight, a smile is on my face, I'm talking and laughing.	



V = Values

Our beliefs and life experiences influence our values. We often cite our “values” as the reason why we did or did not do something. Yet, have we really stopped to write down what they are? When we get caught up in the moment, emotions are high and we feel like we are cornered and we may not react how we would have wanted. Recall when this has happened in the past. What were the triggers and how can you have better control of them next time? **PAUSE** for a moment. Ask yourself “Who do I **choose** to be during the COVID 19?” “How do my values guide me to move into the learning or growth zone.” “If you are already there, what can you do to sustain it, still be grateful, and appreciative of yourself and others?”



I = Identify Resources

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES:

- Coos Health and Wellness: 541 -266-6700
24/7 crisis hotline: 541-266-6800 or 888-543-5763
- Curry Community Health: Gold Beach: 541-425-7545
Brookings: 541-813-2535
Port Orford, 373-8085
Crisis: 877-519-9322
- Costa Clinical Psychology: Brookings, 541-412-0700
- Waterfall Clinic: 541-435-7032
- North Bend Medical Center: 541-267-5151

WARM LINES:

- Oregon Senior Loneliness Line: 1-800-282-7035 or 503-200-1633
- Oregon Senior Peer Outreach Line: 1-833-736-4676
- David Romprey Oregon Warmline: 1-800-698-2392
- The Friendship Line: 1-800-971-0016

COVID-19 SERVICES (temporary):

- Essential Needs - Coos: 541-269-2013 call answered by Area Agency on Aging
Spanish: 541-269-2013
- Essential Needs - Curry: 541-307-1366 call answered by Coastline Neighbors
Spanish: 541-269-0563

Want to TEXT?

Crisis Text Line 24/7 Text "SOS" to 741741

DDH Text "TalkWithUs" to 66746

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Text "TalkWithUs" to 66746

Oregon Lines for Life Text 4-10 pm daily "teen2teen" to 839863

Spanish Speakers Text "Hablanos" to 66746

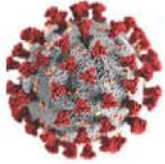
Trevor Project (LGBTQ) Text "START" to 678678

Veterans Crisis Line 838255

Call 911 if you are experiencing an emergency

D = Disinfect & Distance

What you should know about COVID-19 to protect yourself and others



Know about COVID-19

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person.
- The virus that causes COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has spread throughout the world.
- COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild (or no symptoms) to severe illness.



Know how COVID-19 is spread

- You can become infected by coming into close contact (about 6 feet or two arm lengths) with a person who has COVID-19. COVID-19 is primarily spread from person to person.
- You can become infected from respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- You may also be able to get it by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then by touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.



Protect yourself and others from COVID-19

- There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Stay home as much as possible and avoid close contact with others.
- Wear a cloth face covering that covers your nose and mouth in public settings.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Practice social distancing

- Buy groceries and medicine, go to the doctor, and complete banking activities online when possible.
- If you must go in person, stay at least 6 feet away from others and disinfect items you must touch.
- Get deliveries and takeout, and limit in-person contact as much as possible.



Prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

- Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Avoid public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.
- Separate yourself from other people and pets in your home.
- There is no specific treatment for COVID-19, but you can seek medical care to help relieve your symptoms.
- If you need medical attention, call ahead.



Know your risk for severe illness

- Everyone is at risk of getting COVID-19.
- Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more severe illness.



So What's Next?

Where do I go from HERE?!

Sometimes it feels like there are more unknowns about COVID-19 since we first learned about it. More questions than answers. How long do we have to 'Stay Home'?" "When will 'it' go away?" "When will things go back to 'normal'?" No one really knows (outside my control), but we know how to handle our thoughts, anxiety level and how to build our resilience with these challenging times. Resilience is something we build upon. It is not one and done. We must continually keep our mind, body and spirit healthy; replenished with self-care, reflections and positive, forward action to maintain and improve our resiliency to challenging and changing situations.

Resilience is defined as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. As much as resilience involves "bouncing back" from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.

An article in the American Psychological Association, provides the following road map for adapting to life changing situations and how to emerge even stronger than before:

- Build your Connections: Prioritize your relationships and/or join a group.
- Foster Wellness: Take care of your body. Practice mindfulness. Avoid negative outlets.
- Find Purpose: Help others. Be proactive. Move towards your goals. Look for opportunities for self-discovery.
- Embrace Healthy Thoughts: Keep things in perspective. Accept change. Maintain hopeful outlook. Leave your past.
- Seek help.



Notes:



References:

Page 2: Adapted from Dr. Russ Harris: How to Respond Effectively to Corona Crisis. <https://e-tmf.org/app/uploads/2020/03/FACE-COVID-How-to-respond-effectively-to-the-Corona-crisis-by-Russ-Harris.pdf>

Page 3: Adapted from Coronavirus Anxiety Workbook. <https://thewellnesssociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-Anxiety-Workbook-1.pdf>

Page 4: Infographics from Mental Health First Aid. <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2020/03/how-to-help-someone-with-anxiety-or-depression-during-covid-19/>

Page 5: Contributed by Mia Fisher, LCSW.

Page 6: Infographics from <https://press.aarp.org/2018-10-10-Mental-Well-Being-Related-Better-Brain-Health-Older-Adults>

page 7: Infographic shared by Connie Hunter. Noted in Roseburg VA Health Care System Facebook. https://m.facebook.com/VARoseburg/photos/?tab=album&album_id=203810856315214

Page 8: Adapted from Coronavirus Anxiety Workbook. <https://thewellnesssociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-Anxiety-Workbook.pdf>

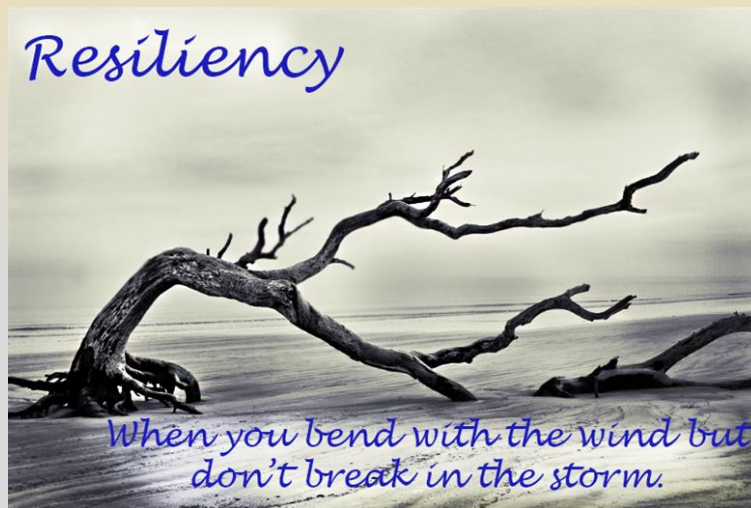
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Italicized as direct quotes.



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