

# Is worry about COVID-19 disrupting your life?

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The World Health Organization has declared the COVID-19 outbreak to be a pandemic. The constant flow of news from all types of media may heighten fears about the disease. People need facts to protect themselves from contacting the infection, but information overload can spur excessive worry. Dr. Sheila Jowsey-Gregoire, a Mayo Clinic psychiatrist, says anxiety can build when people feel that a situation is out of their control, and when rumors spread.

"Many unique situations are going to arise that need to be considered on a case-by-case basis," says Dr. Jowsey-Gregoire. "Using [problem-solving](#) and flexibility as key coping strategies, rather than relying on emotional coping—anger and despair—will help you feel, and be, in control."

Dr. Jowsey-Gregoire offers these tips on what to do when worry about the coronavirus becomes disruptive:

- Limit exposure to news media.
- Avoid staying up late to monitor news.

- When you do look at news, be sure to seek out reputable sources.
- Connect with friends and family for support via social media or a phone.
- Meditate, stretch or practice deep breathing.
- Do activities you enjoy.
- Be optimistic.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Get some exercise.
- Avoid turning to drugs or alcohol to cope.
- Use your moral compass or spiritual life for support.
- Remind yourself that strong feelings will fade.

"Using your support network to generate ideas about how to solve problems and help defuse tension is important as well," says Dr. Jowsey-Gregoire. "Be careful not to react to rumors to ensure that you are not reacting to information that is not an accurate assessment of what is really happening. Avoid spreading rumors as well."

Contact your [health care](#) provide if you experience:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in eating patterns
- Difficulty concentrating on normal tasks
- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, prolonged sadness or overwhelming worry

Dr. Jowsey-Gregoire says the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website provides resources for people with mental [health](#) concerns. You can also call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Distress Hotline at 1-800-985-5990 or text "talkwithus" to 66746. People with deafness or [hearing loss](#) can use preferred relay service to call 1-800-985-5990.

Check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for additional updates on COVID-19.

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