

Got election anxiety? Experts have coping tips

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(HealthDay)—It may be no surprise that this year's presidential election

is taking a toll on the mental health of Americans.

In a new *Harris Poll* survey, conducted on behalf of the American Psychological Association, 68% of U.S. adults said the 2020 election is a significant source of stress in their lives.

"The brain, body, the entire system—all are trying to adjust to a lack of normalcy," said Donya Wallace, a certified therapist and visiting professor at Palo Alto University in California. "Experiences of anxiety can be quite different from one person to the next. For some, it may be more of a somatic experience, with physical discomfort like muscle tension or headaches. For others, it may manifest as sleep disturbance, loss of appetite or difficulties concentrating. Others experience a sense of dread and despair, sadness and depression."

Traditional ways of coping aren't as helpful this year, either.

"Many people rely upon the support of family and friends during difficult times. The pandemic has impacted our ability to connect through [personal contact](#), so we have become more reliant upon [social platforms](#)," Wallace said in a university news release.

While [social media](#) helps people stay connected, it has also made people aware of others' political views, which can cause ruptures in relationships.

Wallace offered a variety of tips for safeguarding [personal relationships](#), de-stressing with self-care and voting comfortably:

- **Protect personal relationships.** Set boundaries around political discussions. Agree to disagree. Focus on shared interests in a relationship, perhaps creating a list of safe topics.

- **Take care of yourself.** Set limits on [social media use](#). Consider giving up platforms that cause distress. Turn the TV off. Spend time every day doing activities that bring you a sense of peace—walk, exercise, do yoga, read a good book or have a family movie night.
- **Address concerns about voting.** Use the buddy system, going to the polls with a friend or family member who can provide company and a sense of comfort. Verify your registration and polling location in advance. Vote early, if possible. Plan for long lines, packing a meal and bringing a chair. Remember to wear a mask and practice social distancing.

More information: Learn more about anxiety at the [American Psychological Association](#).

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