



Anxiety During a Public Health Crisis: Ulliance Can Help with That

Although the name may change, the anxiety surrounding the crisis stays the same. Whether we're talking about a type of Coronavirus, (such as the current COVID-19 or SARS), Bird Flu, or Ebola, a public health crisis is just that – a crisis. And with any crisis, it's only natural to react. Common stress reactions for these situations are generally similar and easily identifiable, especially if symptoms develop into something that affects our mental well-being or impairs our ability to function. For parents, it's also imperative to think about the emotional well-being of our children. Being mindful of common signs of anxiety, and the simple suggestions below can help us understand our own emotional reactions so we can be a pillar of strength for others.

Dos and Don'ts for Families

DON'T pay attention to unverified information or gossip. Unfortunately, we can't trust everything we read. Some articles available on the internet do not contain facts verified by reputable sources.

DO Focus on reputable sites such as the CDC <https://www.cdc.gov>; World Health Organization <https://www.who.int>; or if your place of employment has an intranet posting/link that they have already put together for you, reference that.

DON'T watch news outlets for hours on end.

DO minimally watch the news or set a time limit, change the channel or turn off the tv completely.

DON'T Rely on social media for facts.

DO Minimize your screen time on social media. Information on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter may not be accurate and can feel very overwhelming, so it's best to limit exposure.

DON'T obsess.



DO find other things to do with your time to keep your mind and hands busy! Try tackling a new work project, exercise, cooking, cleaning or organizing, reading a book, or playing a fun board game with your family.

DON'T try to be a hero. Our mental and physical wellness are connected. Learn the signs of anxiety and stress (listed below) and be on the lookout for red flags for yourself and your family/friends.

DO be proactive. Check in with your loved ones to see how they're doing, and don't forget to check in with yourself so you'll be in a better position to help everyone feel healthy and supported. Ask for help and assist your families to do the same.

Know the Common Signs and Red Flags

Signs of anxiety for both adults and children can manifest themselves in the form of behavioral, physical, emotional and cognitive responses. Keep an eye out for certain changes, which can be warning signs for those who are struggling with stress and anxiety.

Behavior:

- Increase/Decrease in activity level
- Increase in alcohol, tobacco or drug use
- Increased irritability, or argumentative behavior
- Difficulty relaxing or sleeping
- Crying spells
- Excessive Worry
- Difficulty with focus or concentration

Physical/Body:

- Stomach upset
- Headaches
- Changes in appetite
- Sweating
- Tremors or muscle spasms
- Easily startled
- Chest pain

Emotions:

- Fear
- Depression
- Guilt
- Anger
- Euphoric
- Numb

Thoughts:

- Difficulty with memory and focus
- Confusion
- Thoughts of dread or doom

Many people have difficulty managing emotions, especially during stressful situations. If you notice one or more of the warning signs above, it might be time to get some guidance and support.



"Life is 10 percent what you experience and 90 percent how you respond to it."

~Dorothy M. Neddermeyer



Resources for Parents

Public conversations, news coverage and recent school closings due to COVID-19 have made it imperative to include our children in the discussion. In the current climate, it's virtually impossible to "shelter" our kids from this topic. So how can we, as parents or other trusted adults help children make sense of what they hear in a way that is honest and accurate, but minimizes anxiety and fear? In general, keep your child's age in mind, and keep information simple as possible, reminding them that health and school officials are working hard to keep everyone safe and healthy.

Remain calm and reassuring. Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They'll pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.

Make yourself available to listen and to talk. Make time to talk. Be sure children know they can come to you when they have questions. Ask them what they've heard about COVID-19. Information that kids gather from friends or social media may not be accurate.

Avoid language that might blame others and lead to stigma. Remember that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race or ethnicity. Avoid making assumptions about who might have COVID-19.

Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online. Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.

Provide information that is honest and accurate. (The World Health Organization's [myth buster](#) page can help you give correct answers to some surprising questions and misinformation that is spreading). Give children information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child.

Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs. Remind children to stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick. Remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash. Review proper hand-washing techniques with small children. Make it fun by teaching them to sing their favorite song for at least 20 seconds. Try this: www.washyourlyrics.com

Set a daily routine or schedule at home. School closings are causing a lot of chaos, and those everyday routines will fall by the wayside. Establish a "new normal" routine, which can help calm kids who need structure. Start by using their normal school day as the framework (when are they used to waking? Having meals? Play time?). If your child has assigned schoolwork, do they do their best work in the morning or in the afternoon? If e learning has not been set up by your school district, refer to some [creative ways to keep kids busy](#), that don't always involve more screen time.

Ulliance can help with the overwhelming emotions such as anxiety and stress and provide other helpful resources.

Counseling sessions can be scheduled by phone—as we are minimizing in person contact during this time.



Contact us we're here to help: 800.448.8326