

Frontline Families

How to Manage Our Anxiety During a Time
of Uncertainty

Presented by Hamel Health and Counseling Center



MERRIMACK COLLEGE

Check in...

Right now, we're going through a unique time. It is understandable to have an array of feelings and thoughts (among them anxiety, stress, fear, isolation, frustration etc). We're here to help you through it.

Our goal is not to rid ourselves of discomfort. It is to build the resilience to tolerate and manage our discomforts.

Reliable resources are important for the most accurate info.

WHO	<u>Coronavirus disease 2019</u>
Mass.gov	<u>Information on the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)</u>
CDC	<u>Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)</u>
Red Cross	<u>Coronavirus Safety Tips & Precautions</u>
Merrimack Task Force	<u>https://www.merrimack.edu/health-alerts/</u>

Not feeling well? Should I worry?

Check your symptoms for COVID 19 online.

Massachusetts residents can use www.Buoy.com/mass for advice via an online health assistant for free.

This will help you assess your symptoms and find the right care.

Never use this in place of emergency care, for an emergency, call 911.

Self care will strengthen your mind and your body.



Staying Healthy at Home

Exercise

- Reduces anxiety and depression.
- Boosts immune system.
- In home workouts and/or walks outside where physical distancing is possible.

Diet

- Nutrition is key to optimal immune function.
- An opportunity to increase comfort level in kitchen.

Mental Health

- Therapy, medication, support groups.

Staying Healthy at Home (continued)

Sleep

- Studies have shown a lack of sleep can make one more susceptible to illnesses and have a slower recovery.
- At least 7-8 hours per night.

Hygiene/Common Sense

- Handwashing, sanitizers, wearing masks when going out.

Substance Use

- Avoid excessive alcohol use, as it can affect immune system and worsen mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.
- Smoking may be a risk factor for more severe COVID-19 infection.

Anxiety: When to Be Concerned

Anxiety is an important survival mechanism. It is key to our livelihood. However, sometimes it gets the best of us. Here are some examples of when to be concerned:

- Threat scanning
- Catastrophizing
- Hypothetical Worry
- Emotional Reasoning
- Fortune Telling



Controlling What I Can; Letting Go of What I Can't

What can I control -

- Following relevant, reliable information *responsibly*
- Considering *my* values and priorities
- Building structure and routine for myself
- Building connections
- Leaning on supports
- SELF CARE!!!!!!

Outside of my control -

- Other people's choices and opinions
- State's reopening
- Cancellation of travel/social plans
- The weather
- Other people's health

Thought Challenging

The **ABCDE** Technique

ATTENTION - stop and pay *attention* to what you're thinking

BELIEVE? - do NOT believe all of your thoughts!

CHALLENGE - challenge your thoughts; is that *actually* true; is it fact or opinion

DISCOUNT - let go of unhealthy, unproductive thoughts

EXPLORE OPTIONS - what are my options right now; what is helpful/productive

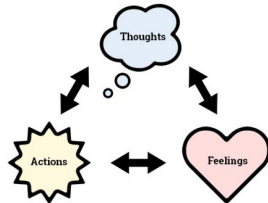
Worksheets to Explore

Thoughts Feelings Actions

Everyone has problems, both big and small. To better solve your big problems, it helps to learn how your **thoughts, feelings, and actions** are connected.

Imagine you have an upcoming test, and you think "I'm going to fail". Because of this thought, you start to worry. You are so worried that you feel sick just thinking about the test. Because it's so uncomfortable, you decide not to study.

The thought ("I'm going to fail") led to a feeling (worry), which led to an action (not studying). What might have changed if you had a different thought?



Thoughts are the words that run through your mind. They're the things you tell yourself about what's going on around you. There are many different thoughts you could have about a single situation.



Feelings come and go as different things happen to you. You might feel happy, angry, and sad, all in one day. Some feelings are uncomfortable, but they are not bad. Everyone has these feelings from time-to-time.



Actions are the things you do, or the way you behave. Your thoughts and feelings have a big impact on how you act. If you feel happy, you are likely to do nice things. But if you feel angry, you might want to act mean.

The Cognitive Model Example Sheet

Situation
Something happens. This step covers only the facts of what happened, without any interpretation.

A coworker, who I'm usually friendly with, walked past me in the hallway without saying "hello".

Thought
Using thought, you interpret the situation. These interpretations are not always accurate. There are many ways to think about the same situation.

My Actual Thought	Alternate Thought
What did I do wrong? Why is she mad at me?	She didn't even notice me.
	She must have a lot on her mind.

Feeling
You experience emotions based upon your thoughts about the situation.

• Hurt	• Unfazed
• Offended	• Neutral

Behavior
You respond to the situation based upon your thoughts and feelings.

I couldn't stop thinking about what happened.	I wouldn't give the situation a second thought.
Later, I acted coldly toward the coworker.	I would act warmly to my coworker, as usual.

Breathing Exercises

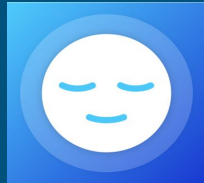


Building Resilience

- Maintain/Create a routine
- Connect with others
- Don't judge yourself
- Practice self-care (eg Meditate, mindfulness, exercise etc.)
- Accept what you can control and what you cannot
- Reflect, process

Helpful Apps and Resources

- [Hamel's Site](#)
- [Thriving Campus](#)
- [Psychology Today](#)
- [Mindshift](#) - CBT skill oriented
- [CBT - iCoach](#) - This app helps improving sleeping habits
- [Insight Timer](#) - Helps with mindfulness techniques
- [Calm](#) - Meditation and Sleep Stories (in app purchases may be required)
- [COVID Coach](#) - Cope with stress and stay well



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