

## Published April 29th, 2020 **Five tips to managing anxiety in challenging times** *By Linda Fodrini-Johnson*



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC, is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been practicing professional care management since 1984. Linda founded Eldercare Services, a full-service care management and home care company in 1989. Eldercare Services is now a division of Home Care Assistance and continues to provide Bay Area families with care management, advocacy, counseling, support groups and education. Staying healthy and managing stress is even more crucial to our lives now. Given "Stay in Place" orders, we have time to explore a variety of mindfulness practices both to change and improve our habits that will lead to better lives.

The current worldwide pandemic is causing sleepless nights, hand wringing and some strange behaviors. Fear can sometimes bring out the worst in us. However, I am also seeing some incredible acts of kindness and selflessness in neighbors helping neighbors.

The anxiety that many of us are experiencing related to the current COVID-19 epidemic is a "situational anxiety" brought on by something we can't very well control outside changing our behaviors for a period of time.

Below are five tips and resources for balancing our emotions during this unprecedented time in our history:

1) Focus on the positives in your life and the world. Start your morning with a gratitude prayer or list of what you are thankful for. Read the comic strips before you read any news and save a positive story to read last. Say a daily affirmation. You could limit your news watching to every other day or once a week if you find it distressing.

2) Mindfulness exercises are a wonderful way of disconnecting from all emotions by connecting with your inner being and at the same time disconnecting from all the negativity and to-dos of our daily lives. This does not happen with one try. It is something that you need to do daily and increase the time of the exercise as you become more comfortable. Just learning to focus on your breathing can be a great first start - and it helps with

## sleeping too!

3) Get productive. Distraction is a great mind diversion when you are ruminating on your fears or unfounded beliefs. Have a list of projects you would like to complete and tackle one of them every time you get yourself in a worry-knot.

4) Exercise. If you start to worry or become anxious, take a walk or follow an exercise video. Yoga is a great exercise that is both a mindfulness practice and moves your body to be more flexible. If getting on the floor is a challenge, look for chair yoga.

5) Eat well. Diet is extremely important to mental health. Add immune boosting foods to your diet like citrus, blueberries, almonds, mushrooms, green tea, and red bell peppers.

If your feelings are interfering with your daily life, such as trouble concentrating or increased use of alcohol, seek help. The Disaster Distress Hotline is 1-800-985-5990.

If you need to process your worries, reach out to a friend or professional. Sometimes it is just good to talk through our anxieties. The Eldercare Services Aging Life Care Professionals can take your calls and help with consultations on the phone or via FaceTime calls. The Home Care Assistance team is available to assist you with caregiving needs. Our teams are following very high standards to keep everyone healthy during this epidemic - call us at (925) 937-2018.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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