

Tips for Managing Fears and Anxiety around Coronavirus

As information about Coronavirus (COVID-19) unfolds, there can be a wide range of thoughts, feelings and reactions. Feeling anxiety is normal when situations are uncertain and our anxious minds can go into “panic mode.” During these times, we tend to underestimate our ability to cope. **Be mindful that you are more resilient than you think!**

The following is a checklist of reactions that you may experience: increased anxiety, worry, or panic; depressive symptoms; social withdraw; difficulty concentrating; sleep difficulties; anger or noticeable changes in personality; hyper-vigilance to your health and body; helplessness or hopelessness; maladaptive coping (e.g., engaging in risk behaviors, substance use).

Ways to Manage Fears & Anxieties:

- **Get the facts.** Stay informed with the latest health and campus information through the dedicated CDC website, the World Health Organization website, and SIU's website: <https://shc.siu.edu/coronavirus/>
- **Keep things in perspective.** Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you spend watching or listening to upsetting media. Taking a media break can be helpful in reducing anxiety. Pay attention to positive news as well. This is also true for how and what you communicate about the Coronavirus! Speak up if you hear, see, or read misinformation. Spread good news as well.
- **Avoid stigmatizing or generalizing.** Someone who has a cough or a fever does not necessarily have coronavirus (avoid generalizing). Be aware of your behavior and attitude change toward others. Examine any irrational or rigid thoughts that exist.
- **Reduce anxiety by reducing your risk.** Follow the safety advice from the CDC, such as: frequent hand washing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing, avoiding touching your face, and staying home when sick.
- **Keep connected.** Maintaining social networks can relieve stress and anxiety. Resist withdrawing and isolating yourself from the care and support that others can provide. Show compassion and support.
- **Practice self-care.** Take a walk, get fresh air, meditate, eat well-balanced meals, get plenty of sleep... do what you enjoy and take care of yourself.
- **Challenge yourself to stay present in the current moment.** Notice the sights, sounds, tastes and other sensory experiences in your immediate moment and name them. Engaging in mindfulness activities is one way to help stay grounded when things feel beyond your control.
- **Seek additional help.** Reach out to trusted individuals and learn about the resources available to you. Call CAPS to schedule an appointment with your counselor or a crisis drop-in session with the Counselor On Duty (618-453-5371).
- **Focus on what you can control.** There are things you can do and it's helpful to focus on those to maintain your sense of safety. One way to do that is to say no to social gatherings if attending makes you worry about getting sick or worsens your anxiety. Other ways include utilizing this list.

Resources

Some students find reassurance in equipping themselves with the facts about COVID-19 or talking with friends or family. If you are experiencing stress, fear, anxiety or other emotions that are making it difficult to keep up with your regular activities, consider viewing our websites or contacting us for services available for students:

- **SIU Counseling and Psychological Services (618) 453-5371**
- **SIU Student Health Services (618) 453-3311**
- **SIU Wellness and Health Promotion Services (618) 536-4441**