

Ideas for Coping with Coronavirus Anxiety

Written by Maisha Johnson on March 23, 2020

You really don't need to check the CDC's website again. You probably do need a break, though.



Take a breath and give yourself a pat on the back. You've successfully managed to look away from breaking news long enough to find some resources that might actually help with your stress.

That's no easy thing right now.

Experts are recommending [social distancing](#) and [self-quarantine](#) to help prevent the spread of the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19), sending most of us into isolation.

It makes sense if you haven't been doing much at all except [ruminating](#) on [updates](#) about the virus and the availability of toilet paper.

So what can you do about your coronavirus anxiety?

I'm glad you asked, because I've collected a whole list of tools to help your [mental health](#) during the COVID-19 scare.

This list could also apply to any moment when [breaking news headlines](#) are all-consuming and hard to look away from.

Think of it this way: Reducing your stress is actually one of the best ways you can deal with this crisis. [Too much stress](#) can hurt your immunity *and* your mental health.

Plus, you just plain deserve to finally feel some relief after spiraling through your anxieties for this long.

It's okay if you're feeling anxious

First things first: There's nothing wrong with you for feeling anxious right now.

Ignoring the stress or judging yourself for feeling it is tempting, but it probably won't help in the end.

[Acknowledging your feelings](#) — even if they're scary — can help you cope in a healthy way.

And I've got news for you: You're not the only one who's freaking out. The news is legitimately frightening, and fear is a normal, natural response.

You're not alone.

If you're already living with a chronic illness, then COVID-19 might be especially frightening. And if you're living with a mental illness such as [an anxiety disorder](#),

then the constant barrage of headlines might have you on the edge of feeling like you're [losing control](#).

There are plenty of [resources](#)[Trusted Source](#) out there about how to directly deal with coronavirus anxiety, and it's important to have those [strategies](#) in your toolbox when you need them.

But for this list, we're going to take a break from all of that.

Because [science shows](#) that taking a breather can help interrupt your anxiety, reduce your levels of the stress hormone [cortisol](#), and even retrain your brain to change [unhelpful thinking patterns](#).

Which is all the more reason to be proud of yourself for ending up here, where all you have to do is sit back, click through some helpful tools, and finally take a break from that haunting sense of impending doom.

These tools alone aren't going to fix everything, and it's a good idea to [reach out for professional help](#) if you're really struggling to keep your anxiety under control.

But I hope these apps and websites can give you a moment to break the cycle of headline stress, if even for a moment.

1. Take a virtual museum tour

Visiting a public space like a museum probably isn't very high on your list of priorities right now.

But you can experience some fascinating museum tours right from the comfort and safety of your own home.

More than 500 museums and galleries around the world have partnered with Google Arts & Culture to display their collections online as virtual tours.

Explore all of the options on the [Google Arts & Culture website](#), or start with [this curated list of top choices](#).

2. Take a virtual hike through a national park

“A journey to places most people never go.”

Doesn't that sound perfect at a time like this? It's from the tagline for [The Hidden Worlds of the National Parks](#), an interactive documentary and exhibit from Google Arts & Culture.

The exhibit lets you take 360-degree tours of U.S. National Parks, including secluded areas that most people will never see in their lifetime.

You can learn fun facts from park ranger tour guides, fly over an active volcano in [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#), dive through a shipwreck at [Dry Tortugas National Park](#), and more.

3. Watch wild animals in real time

Speaking of nature, have you ever wondered what wildlife is up to while we humans are stressing out about the latest breaking news?

Most animals are simply continuing to live their lives, and you can witness them doing so in real time with the live cams at [Explore.org](#).

There's something reassuring about seeing that the [dolphins are still swimming](#), the [eagles are still nesting](#), and the [puppies of the world](#) are still really stinkin' cute — even as you feel like everything is falling apart.

Personally, I'm partial to [Bear Cam](#), which lets you watch brown bears catching salmon in Alaska. Watch long enough and you might even catch some adorable young cubs learning to hunt!

4. Do nothing for 2 minutes

Doing nothing may seem like a wild idea right now — there's so much to worry about!

But what if you challenged yourself to really do *nothing* for only 2 minutes?

The website [Do Nothing for 2 Minutes](#) is designed for exactly that.

The concept is simple: All you have to do is listen to the sound of waves without touching your mouse or keyboard for 2 minutes straight.

It's harder than it looks, especially if you've been stuck in constant cycles of checking the news.

If you touch your computer before the 2 minutes are up, then the site lets you know how long you lasted and resets the clock.

This website was created by the makers of the [Calm app](#), so if your 2 minutes of nothing helps quiet your brain, check out the app for more moments of calm.

5. Learn to give yourself a massage

What a dilemma: You could really use a relaxing massage to help you de-stress, but social distancing is keeping you more than a massage's distance from other human beings.

The upside? This is an excellent opportunity to learn to massage yourself. Practice regularly to build your skills and you might be able to relieve your tension just as well as a massage from another person.

You can start with [this tutorial](#) by licensed massage therapist Chandler Rose, or look up instructions for the specific parts of your body that could use some love, including:

[your feet](#)

[legs](#)

[lower back](#)

[upper back](#)

[hands](#)

6. Browse a free digital library for e-books and audiobooks

When you're alone, stressed, and in need of a distraction, [OverDrive's app Libby](#) might just be your new BFF.

Libby lets you borrow free e-books and audiobooks from local libraries. You can enjoy them right from your phone, tablet, or Kindle.

Check out some [audiobook hacks from Book Riot](#) to optimize your experience even more.

Not sure where to start choosing from the thousands of available books? OverDrive has lists of [recommended reads](#) to help.

7. Do a guided meditation that makes you laugh

There are many [types of meditation](#), and depending on how much your anxiety is in overdrive at the moment, some might be more difficult than others to relax into.

So why not try a guided meditation that's not taking itself too seriously?

If you don't mind swear words, then spend 2 1/2 minutes with [F*ck That: An Honest Meditation](#), which is sure to remind you that you're not the only one who's coping by cursing the general awfulness of reality.

Or you can try not to [laugh at this meditation](#), and when you inevitably fail, give yourself permission to laugh all you want.

8. Breathe deeply with guided GIFs

[According to research](#)[Trusted Source](#), your breath can be a super effective tool for calming and regulating your anxiety.

You can learn all about [the science behind](#) using your breath for stress relief, or jump straight into experiencing the benefits by following a calming GIF that guides your breathing.

Try deep breathing with [these 6 gifs from DeStress Monday](#) or [these 10 choices from DOYOU Yoga](#).

9. Get your immediate needs met with an interactive self-care checklist

Who has time to get to the bottom of why your anxiety's spinning out of control when you're busy with... well, with your anxiety spinning out of control?

Thankfully, there are people who have already done the work of exploring your needs, so all you have to do is follow their premade roadmaps to feeling better.

[Everything is Awful and I'm Not Okay](#) includes questions to ask before giving up. It's a simple one-page checklist to remind you of some practical feel-better strategies that you can use right now.

[You feel like sh*t](#) is a self-care game designed to remove the weight of decision-making and guide you through figuring out exactly what you need.

The takeaway

A period of global panic can feel like just the moment your anxiety was waiting for to spin out of control.

But perhaps the resources on this list are just the thing to get your mental health back on track.

You can bookmark these links for future use, commit to visiting one every hour, and share them with your friends so that you have something to talk about *besides* the apocalypse. How you use them is up to you.

Remember that it's okay to feel what you're feeling, but there are healthy ways to process your anxiety, and you can always reach out for support if you need it.

I hope you enjoy your digital hikes, virtual tours, and deep breathing. You deserve these moments of gentleness and care.



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