

Suggestions for Coping at this Time

Do Something Different

Whenever you find yourself worrying, following this simple step-by-step approach can help you refocus on the present moment.

Catch Yourself When You Are Worrying • Worry is so habitual that you can easily get lost in it without even realizing it. To help with this, listen to what you are saying to yourself. Catch the words you use as you worry. Your body will also tell you when it's happening, as most people feel more physical symptoms (tight chest, racing heart, sweaty, shortened breathing, body tension, etc.) when they worry. Also, you are likely to feel more nervous, anxious, frustrated or angry as worry occurs. Notice your behavior as it surfaces, especially nervous habits. Use any of these warning signs to catch yourself.

Thought Stop • Once you've caught it, stop the worry process by saying "STOP" to yourself or, if appropriate, out loud. You can also see a red stop sign in your mind as you say stop. This process of engaging your thoughts constructively leaves little room in your conscious mind for worry.

Take Slow Deep Breaths • Taking deep abdominal breaths can help you feel more relaxed and at ease. Deep breathing can stop worry. Try doing the 5-second breath exercise described below.

Focus Your Attention Positively • Now that you are calmer, direct your attention where you need or want it to go. These things can include your work duties, family needs or whatever brings you a greater sense of stability or pleasure.

Deep Breathing

The practice of deep abdominal breathing on a regular basis can help you feel more relaxed and at ease. Deep breathing increases oxygen flow to the body and brain, decreases negative thinking and worry. Practicing deep breathing can also enhance concentration and promote the excretion of bodily toxins.

The 5-Second Breath

- 1) Take a slow deep breath that fills about 5 seconds of time for each breath (about 2½ seconds inhale, 2 ½ seconds exhale).
- 2) You can use the second hand on a clock or watch to time your breath. Use of the second hand can help direct your attention away from worry, focusing instead on the deep breath and your experience of relaxation.
- 3) Your chest, torso, and stomach will expand on the inhale and contract on the exhale. As you expand on the inhale, your lungs fill deeply.
- 4) Breathe through your mouth or nose, whichever feels more comfortable.
- 5) Try taking 1 minute of the 5-second breaths. Or you can take sets of 5 or 10 of the 5-second breaths. Try either approach 3-5 times per day for maximum effect.

Self-Care Tips

As our attention becomes focused on news coverage and other events, it is easy to find ourselves slipping away from healthy habits and coping strategies, at a time when we need them more than ever. Here are some suggestions to help you stay on track with your health habits, which in turn will help you feel a greater sense of control during these uncertain times.

- Recognize your own feelings and talk about them with someone you trust.
- Take care of yourself by making sure you get enough sleep, eat well and exercise to take care of stress. Drink plenty of water and avoid large amounts of caffeine and sugar.
- Answer your children's questions simply and honestly. Don't share more information than they need to know. Try to keep your answers unbiased so that your kids don't pick up prejudices about other groups of people.
- Reassure your children about their safety.
- Limit exposure to news coverage that focuses on upsetting images. It's ok to turn off the television and do other things.
- Continue your regular routine at home and work, so that things feel normal for you and your family.
- Try journaling. Many people find it helpful to write out their thoughts and feelings.
- Spend time on the things that are really important to you. Make sure you're focusing your energy on the things that matter most.
- Call Aurora's Employee Assistance Program for free & confidential support 24 hours a day.