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**In light of the global spread of the coronavirus, there are a lot of changes that we've been required to make in the past several months.** Understandably, this has left many of us on-edge, anxious, worried, and overwhelmed. I hope that these ideas will provide some encouragement and support as this crisis unfolds.



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1. **Know that you're not alone.** As a worldwide community, we are going through the unfolding of this experience together. Fear and uncertainty are natural responses to something that we don't understand that has the potential to threaten the safety of ourselves or those we love. Stay connected to friends and loved ones. Reach out. Offer support. Checking in with others is a way to stay active and solution focused. ***We are not alone.***
2. **Reduce media consumption.** In my private practice, I have found that people generally fall into two categories. The ones who limit their news consumption and the ones who open every headline notification. Not surprisingly, the ones who are checking news updates throughout the day and reading sensationalized social media posts, are the ones reporting the highest rates of stress and overwhelm. You don't need to avoid the news entirely, however limit your intake to credible sources like NPR, Centers for Disease Control, and the World Health Organization, and give yourself breaks from media throughout the day. My recommendation is to check the news in the morning and again at the end of the day. Take a break from checking updates throughout the day.
3. **Stick to a routine.** Even if work and school schedules have been disrupted or temporarily postponed, you can create structure and routine at home with regard to sleep schedules, mealtimes, activities, and breaks. If you enjoy downtime on the weekends to catch up on favorite books or shows, make time to continue with those and other enjoyable activities.
4. **Be of service.** Helping others provides a sense of purpose, especially during a time when you might be feeling a loss of control. Reach out to neighbors, colleagues, family members and friends to check in. Offer to help those most vulnerable with food drop-offs, errands, or other acts of service.
5. **Focus on what's in your control:** Keep your daily routine and practice recommended hygiene and other safety precautions (such as avoiding unnecessary travel and crowds, washing hands often for 20 seconds or more, keeping your hands away from your face). Ask yourself, "What is the next indicated step for me to take right now?" That step might be drinking a glass of water or having a snack. Keep it simple and take it moment by moment. When you feel out of control, come back to "What is in my control right now?"
6. **Stay mindful:** When your mind goes to "what if?" bring it back to "what is." What is happening right now, in this very moment? Are you sitting on your sofa? Are you texting with a friend? Are you brushing your teeth? Keep it that simple. Bring yourself back into the present moment again and again, reminding yourself that in this moment, you are safe.



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News about the virus may likely get worse before it gets better. **Stay connected to your support system**; practice calming strategies like yoga, meditation, and breathing; take mindful actions each day; and stay as safe and healthy as possible.



## How to Talk to Your Kids About the Virus

1. **Manage your own anxiety first**, by following the above recommendations, before engaging in a conversation with your kids about the virus.
2. **Share information in small, age-appropriate, bite-sized pieces.** Clear up any misunderstandings your child may have and answer the questions they are asking, without providing additional information that they may not be wondering about. As parents, it's our job to filter out the adult world for our kids as much as possible in order to protect their childhoods. An example of an age-appropriate explanation of the virus is that it is similar to a cold or flu, and most people who get it will be able to stay home, rest, and recover. There are wonderful doctors and nurses who are available to help those who need it.
3. **Reassure your children that they are safe** and that the grown-ups in their lives are making decisions every day to ensure their safety. Sometimes those decisions include taking breaks from activities or classes, which allows them to slow down and spend more time at home.
4. **Empower your children** to know the steps they can take to stay healthy. People tend to feel higher levels of stress when they feel helpless or passive and feel more secure when taking action. The antidote to despair is conscious action. Remind your kids of actions they can take: getting enough rest, washing their hands often, covering their mouths with their elbows if sneezing or coughing, and eating healthy foods.



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If you'd like support, I'm providing phone and video teletherapy sessions in place of in-person visits. You can [schedule a session](https://noelle-wittliff.clientsecure.me/) with me at <https://noelle-wittliff.clientsecure.me/>

Stay healthy and safe,

Noelle

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