

Coping with Uncertainty & Fear



Department of Community
and Human Services
4850 Mark Center Dr.
Alexandria, VA 22311

Tips for Coping

- Have access to media, but limit exposure
- Identify the feelings you are experiencing. Understand that your feelings are normal.
- Talk to others about your feelings.
- Focus on your strengths and abilities, and those of your family and community.
- Stay healthy by sleeping regularly, eating right, avoiding drugs or alcohol, exercising and doing things you enjoy.
- Make safety plans with family and friends.
- Maintain routine.
- Remember that people react in different ways.
- Ask for help if it gets to be too much.

If you are in crisis and need to talk to someone 24/7:

Suicide & Crisis Hotline: Call or text 988; for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, use preferred relay service or dial 711, or, chat at chat.988lifeline.org

Department of Community & Human Services Emergency Services
703.746.3401

For general information and referral in the City of Alexandria: call 703.746.5700 or text 703.346.5599 for assistance

Anti-stress Stretches



Finger Fan: Extend your arms straight out in front of you with palms up. Spread your fingers as far apart as possible and hold for 5 seconds.



Upper-back Stretch: Sit up straight with your fingers interlaced behind your head. Keep your shoulders down, lift your chest and bring your elbows back as far as you can. Hold for 10 seconds.



Ear to Shoulder: Lower your right ear to your right shoulder and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat on other side.



Overhead Reach: Raise your arms over your head and interlace your fingers with your palms facing up. Keep your shoulders down and stretch upwards. Hold for 20 seconds.



Knee Pull: While seated, pull one knee up to your chest as high as possible. Hold with both hands for 10 seconds then repeat the other knee.



Waist Bend: Reach arms overhead with fingers interlaced. Keep shoulders down and bend to one side at the waist. Hold for 20 seconds then repeat on the other side.

Reactions to Uncertainty and Fear

Normal Reactions May Include:

- Fear, terror
- Anxiety, increased worry
- Not wanting to leave home
- Not wanting to be separated from loved ones
- Irritability
- Anger
- Fatigue, exhaustion
- Sadness, crying
- Changes in appetite
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Inability to concentrate
- Forgetfulness
- Frequent errors
- Difficulty making decisions
- Confusion
- Hyperactivity
- Physical complaints
- Nightmares
- New or increased use of tobacco products, alcohol or other drugs



Reactions in Young People May Include:

- Anxiety and irritability
- Sadness and crying
- Fear of separation, being alone
- Clinging, fear of strangers
- Worry, nightmares
- Regression to immature behavior
- Reluctance to go to school
- Increased shyness or aggressiveness
- Headaches, trouble sleeping, stomachaches, other physical complaints
- Nervousness about the future

How You Can Help Young People:

- Take care of yourself
- Stay calm
- Reassure them that you will do everything you can to protect them; share family safety plans at a level they can understand and ask them if they have anything to add
- Talk with them about their feelings
- Listen to understand
- Encourage them to express their feelings through drawing or playing
- Give honest answers to their questions; keep information at a level they can understand
- Maintain routine and regular discipline
- Give them lots of love

Ways to Manage General Stress

- Be kind to yourself and others; we are all doing the best we can.
- Focus on the positive and surround yourself with others who do so.
- Don't demand too much of yourself.
- Ask for help.
- Accept that you can't control everything and be flexible.
- Make a list of things to do each day and set reasonable priorities.
- Divide big tasks into smaller ones.
- Eat healthy and avoid sugar.
- Get plenty of sleep each night.
- Exercise some each day to boost energy and improve your mood.
- Do something you like, something that relaxes you.
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs.
- Give yourself a break when you make a mistake.
- If possible, say "no" to tasks that you know will be stressful for you.
- Talk about things with friends or family.
- Laugh and have fun.
- Let yourself cry.
- Practice deep breathing. Take a slow deep breath through your nose to the count of five. Hold your breath for another 5-count then exhale through your mouth for a 5-count.
- Practice your faith, if applicable