

# PANDEMIC SUPPORT FACT SHEET

## HOW TO COPE WITH ANXIETY DURING DIFFICULT TIMES



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### ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR EMOTIONS

The amount of stress in our lives significantly impacts our emotional experience. We can experience intense emotion in response to high levels of stress or feel anxious about an impending threat. It is important to acknowledge your anxiety. Denying/avoiding emotion can cause health issues. Awareness/acknowledgment of the emotion is the first step to managing and expressing it. Expressing emotion is good for our mental, emotional, and physical health. The key is to find "safe" and "appropriate" ways to express emotion.

2

### MANAGE YOUR THINKING

Being aware of your mental and emotional state is an important step in learning to manage your emotional response to stressful events. Learning emotional self-awareness- what you feel and why you feel it- is key, as well as, understanding the connection between your thoughts (self-talk) and feelings/emotions. For example, how do you react during emotional times? Do you become defensive? Over-react? Cry? Yell? Learning to manage your emotional response to stressful situations, embracing a more positive attitude, and practicing more constructive positive self-talk are all important steps to better managing your thoughts and emotions.

3

### DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

The next step is to create an action plan to better deal with the sources of anxiety affecting your life. If possible, face what you're feeling anxious about head-on. For events outside of your control such as the COVID-19 pandemic, create a list of action items that you can enact that could reduce the risk and potential negative impact of the threat/issue. For example, for the pandemic, you can wear a mask, practice social distancing, and wash your hands. You may also consider reaching out to friends or joining a support group with individuals who can relate to what you are experiencing. If your anxiety is significantly impairing your day-to-day functioning, you may seek professional assistance through your EAP or health plan.

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### PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Taking care of your health, managing your stress levels, and keeping your life in balance are all part of practicing self-care. Make sure you're exercising, getting enough sleep, and eating nutritious foods. Plan your days and don't overcommit yourself. Remember to take regular breaks and engage in leisure activities that you enjoy. Journaling is also beneficial. Writing down your thoughts and feelings can help release stress, anxiety, and tension, while increasing emotional self-regulation.