

## Managing Fears and Anxiety around Coronavirus – COVID-19

As information about Coronavirus unfolds, there can be a wide range of thoughts, feelings and reactions. Below is some helpful information and resources.

### Common Reactions

Please recognise that there can be a wide range of reactions and that over the next few days or weeks you may experience periods of:

- Anxiety, worry, panic, fear • Feeling helplessness • Social withdrawal • Difficulty concentrating and sleeping • Anger • Hyper-vigilance to your health and body • Tears

### Ways to Manage Fears & Anxieties

Although Coronavirus is a health issue that is being taken very seriously by communities and public health authorities worldwide, fear has a way of hijacking our rational thinking, driving us to terrorise ourselves with fearful images that, in reality, are very unlikely, if not outright implausible. The more anxious the climate, the more deliberate you need to be to reset your attention toward the positive outcomes you want to create.

**There are many simple and effective ways to manage your fears and anxieties.**

**Get the facts.** Stay informed with the latest health information through the Ministry of Health advisory website at <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/novel-coronavirus-covid-19>

**Keep things in perspective.** Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you spend watching or listening to upsetting media coverage. Although you'll want to keep informed — especially if you have loved ones in affected countries — remember to take a break from watching the news and focus on the things that are positive in your life and things you have control over.

**Focus on what strengthens you (not what scares you)** Our brains are twice as sensitive to what could go wrong than they are to what could go right. As such, dire images of pandemics (or other similarly cataclysmic events) have a way of capturing our imaginations that an ordinary flu just doesn't.

**Avoid fear-mongers (or at least don't let their fears become your own)** Fear fuels fear. If you're continually engaging in conversations with anxious people who are absorbed in fear-casting and catastrophizing, you'll find it hard not to let their anxieties become your own.

**Be mindful of your assumptions about others.** Someone who has a cough or a fever does not necessarily have coronavirus. Self-awareness is important in not stigmatizing others in our community.

**Stay healthy.** Adopting healthy hygienic habits such as washing your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, frequently, and certainly after sneezing or before/after touching your face or a sick person. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Avoid contact with others who are sick and stay home while sick

**Keep connected.** Maintaining social networks can help maintain a sense of normalcy, and provide valuable outlets for sharing feelings and relieving stress.

**Get on with your life (as it encourage others to get on with theirs)** Let's be committed to not letting my fear of what could go wrong keep us from getting on with our work and life. We don't want to give fear any more power than it warrants.

**Seek additional help.** Individuals who feel an overwhelming worry or anxiety can seek additional professional EAP support.

**Remember EAPworks is here for telephone, Skype or face to face support**

**0800 SELFHELP – 0800 735 343**