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Coping with the Pandemic

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Coping with the Pandemic

With the exception of the 2014 Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa, virtually no one alive has coped with a pandemic on the scale on COVID-19.



▲ Alina M. Baltazar

We do not know how long this will last, what the economic impact will be, and people are dying. We are all stressed! Our usual coping tools may not be an option now that many of us are stuck at home and cut off from our spiritual and social support networks. This impacts the family as well. Here are some tips to help you and your family cope:

- **Set a schedule and have a daily routine.** Go to sleep at about the same time every day. Getting good sleep is an excellent way to boost your immune system.
- **Exercise regularly**, especially outside to get fresh air and sunlight.
- **Eat a healthy diet at regular mealtimes.** Plan your meals ahead of time. Work on being intentional in what you eat. Allow small snacks in between meals if you need to, even the occasional treat.
- **Have more compassion** for yourself and your spouse, as well as other family members in your household. We are all going through a rough time.
- **Reach out to your friends or relatives** who may be more isolated than usual. We all need somebody we can lean on during these difficult times.
- **Do relaxation techniques** to slow your breathing down and help decrease bodily tension when emotionally distressed. Longer relaxation techniques ones could be done daily. Here are some short ones you can do throughout the day (up to 200 times), but first you need to be aware of your first physical sign of emotional distress (burning in your stomach, tightness across your chest, tightness in your jaw, clinched fist, difficulty concentrating, etc.). Try each one of these before you get upset so you know which one will work best you or your family member.
- **Body Scan/Wet Noodle** — Spend 10 seconds, scan your body (head to toe, toe to head), notice any tension, then relax while count to 10. Or tighten tense muscles for five seconds then relax. Or pretend you are a wet noodle and let it all go. This is a fun one for kids! Works for up to 70 percent of people.
- **Diaphragmatic Breathing/Pizza Breathing** — Take a slow deep breath through your nose into your belly for four seconds, hold for four seconds, let out slowly by blowing out through your mouth like it is a straw for four seconds, hold for four seconds, breathe in for four seconds, hold for four seconds, and out for four seconds, and then two more time. This is called four square breathing. Or pretend you are holding a piece of pizza and you are breathing in the smell, but it's too hot to eat so you have to blow on it to cool it off. Feel the tension release when you breathe out. Do that three times.
- **Spending personal and family time with the Lord daily** can give you and your family a sense of grounding in connecting with an all-powerful Creator who knows what you are going through. He is watching over you and will take care of you. Focus on what you have control of in your life, then let God take care of the rest. The Bible tells us repeatedly to not fear because God knows the enemy uses this to take away our hope. Remember, the Lord says, *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand* (Isaiah 41:10 NKJV). ■

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