

ALPHARETTA
family therapy

PANIC IN THE PANDEMIC:
COPING AND MAKING
SENSE OF IT ALL

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Social Distancing? You may feel like you are alone, but you are not!

Unfortunately for some, panic, fear, anger, loneliness, sadness and other feelings may be flooding your mind. Some feelings may be unbearable. We all want things to go back to “the way it used to be”. But we have a new normal now. New things to get used to. A new way of living our lives. This time may allow us to get the things done we have wanted to do. It’s time to slow down and focus on family. No more rushing around. It’s going to be weird. But we can do it.

In our minds, we can get overwhelmed by the thought that our old normal, healthy life will never return and that we will be prisoners in our homes until this virus is eradicated.

We are experiencing significant loss and grief.

- Loss of our freedom to run out to do simple errands
- Loss of being able to connect with friends and family
- Loss of being ready to greet people with a handshake or hug
- Loss of the enjoyment of hanging out at restaurants, bars, libraries, malls and gyms
- Loss of being able to go to work
- Loss of having space and independence, such as sharing the home with all family members
- Loss of freedom to visit a sick relative in the hospital
- Loss of income for many self-employed or small business owners
- Loss of attending school and being with friends
- Loss of graduation, prom, spring break
- Loss of freedom to fly or travel for vacations or business
- Loss of being able to have large gatherings such as weddings, funerals, concerts or attending the cinema

There needs to be an understanding that we are grieving and going through the different grief stages related to Coronavirus Pandemic. The grief stages are fluid, and we may get through one stage then go back to another when there are setbacks.

- **Shock and Denial Stage:** In the beginning, we were shocked to believe that a virus could paralyze a country.
- **Bargaining Stage:** I’ll go out for just a little while. I feel ok. Not showing any symptoms. It will be fine.



- **Depression Stage:** Reality sets in. We are starting to see more and more people catching the virus. Death rates are increasing and realizing that this is not a short term virus and that this may take months to return to "normal" lives. Our anxieties and uncertainties of the future wear us out, so we become exhausted and that turns to depression.
- **Anger Stage:** Many things are out of our control. Our entire life has been overturned like a perfectly set table that has its table cloth ripped away. We are left to hold all the pieces. The pieces are like our shattered dreams or plans that we had made before all of this.
- **Acceptance Stage:** There is a point where we finally settle into acceptance. We no longer try to resist the circumstance and we attempt to find positives in all the losses. We are searching for the meaning of all this. Realizing before, were we living life going through the motions and not stopping to smell the roses. Taking our freedom or family for granted.

So, what can we gain from this?

- Regain time with our families
- Increase the time to do things at home that we were too busy to complete
- Time to finally finish reading a book or watch a tv series
- Finding time to do nothing and take a nap
- Rediscovering love for cooking, baking or crafting
- Gaining creative ways to teach and parent our kids
- Expanding our virtual social networks, so we can connect when we are unable to communicate in person
- Being able to work from home and gaining back any missed time due to not having to commute
- Increasing our time with nature and enjoying Spring. Dogs are walked more than ever. Plus, dogs appreciate to have their humans home
- Working parents who traveled for work are home to tuck in their children
- Gaining an expanding waistline due to eating all the "quarantine snacks"
- Many have found the use of video conferencing to conduct religious services, workouts, online healthcare, online support groups, and online showcasing of latest dance moves and songs.
- Gaining an appreciation of essential employees and all they do

Here are some suggestions to help you cope:

- **LIMIT THE NEWS/MEDIA:** Reduce your time looking at news articles or watching the news: Keep the negative to a minimum. Try a cooking show, comedy, action flick, or a sappy romance.



- **BREATHE SLOWLY & DEEPLY:** When you feel anxious Breathe. Slow your breathing and breathe deeper. Take a breath in, count to 4, and breathe out for 4. Repeat 4 times or until you feel relaxed.
- **GET YOUR BODY MOVING:** Our minds are running a mile a minute. If you want to calm and slow down your mind, moving your body helps. Go for a walk, run the stairs, do Zumba or an online workout video. It doesn't matter what you do. Just get physical.
- **LAY OFF THE BOOZE:** Many people are calming themselves with alcohol. This can have a short term fix, but in the long term, it can develop into a terrible habit. Plus, alcohol can make some people feel more depressed. It dehydrates your body, and you may even feel more lethargic, less motivated or increasingly fatigued.
- **CONNECT WITH OTHERS VIRTUALLY:** Facetime, Zoom, and Skype (and the like) are your links to human connection right now. Use your time now to return all those phone calls that you may not have had time to return before.
- **LEARN TO PICK YOUR BATTLES:** Being home with your family is lovely, but it can cause high tensions or fights if you let little things bother you. You may get frustrated that your kids are not keeping the house as tidy as you prefer. Your spouse might not be as engaging or affectionate as they may be having an internal struggle dealing with all the uncertainty and loss. Try not to criticize your family and have compassion.

Stay Healthy, Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Positive, and Believe you can get through this and handle anything that is thrown your way.

