



8 Tips for when you are feeling really scared

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When life is overwhelming, we may have days, or moments of days, when we just feel really, really scared. A sense of panic comes over us, our heart races, and we feel a bit bewildered and out of it all. Life can be a bit too much at any stage of our lives, however Covid-19 has given us a whole lot more to be scared about. We are concerned about our health. This is a novel virus for humans, it is serious, and we don't know what the long-term effects of being infected are. We are concerned about the economy, loss of jobs, closure of businesses, and a worsening of poverty and well-being. And then we are concerned about State control and whether the State is becoming overly powerful and authoritarian. If you are feeling scared, or have moments when you feel very scared, you are quite normal. It's not a nice feeling, however, it is quite normal.

What can you do when you find yourself having a bit of a fear melt-down?

1. Turn off the news. You do need to stay up to date, especially as the rules seem to change every other day. But you don't need an endless stream of news which just makes the virus everything you hear about all day.
2. Breathe through your panic. Anxiety makes us breathe faster. Try the 4-4 method of deep breathing. 1. Take in a deep breath for a count of 4. 2. Then hold that breath for a count of 4. 3. Then exhale deeply for a count of 4. 4. Then wait for a count of 4 and then take a new breath. The point of deep breathing is that when we are anxious and stressed we breathe shallowly and our breathing, together with our heart rate, speeds up. When you force yourself to breath deeply and slowly, such as with the 4-4 technique, you force your physiology to slow down.
3. Go for a walk or a run or dance or move your body in some way. Now I know you can't always go for a walk outside, but you can walk around your home, or your garden, if you need to. Engaging in some exercise helps a great deal to ground yourself and let go of your panic. Do this for at least 20 minutes.
4. Carry your phone with you, so you can always contact or message someone and tell them how you are feeling. This does not have to be a long session. Just tell someone. Relief can come from telling someone that you are not in a good way right now.

5. Stop thinking and focus on sensations. Go out into the sun and concentrate on the sun on your face and body. Run water over your hands and feel the sensation of the water running through your fingers. Have a look at some great scenic pictures and really take in the beauty of the photographs.
6. Coach yourself with mantras. Repeat to yourself comforting statements such as: "I will get through this." "I have made it through everything else in my life and I will get through this as well." "I breathe in calm, and exhale tension." "I am going to be okay." "I will get through this." "I am going to let go of what I cannot control and just enjoy the present moment." "I am not alone in this." "This will pass."
7. Do something physically comforting like have a hot cup of coffee or tea. If you want that chocolate cake, then have a slice. Lie down under a blanket and read a book and listen to your favourite music. Focus on the sensations of the experience. The smell of the hot coffee. The feel of the blanket and book. The taste of the cake. Really savour all the sensations.
8. Do something creative. Draw a picture. Write a poem. Write a story. Colour in pictures. Do puzzles.

If you continue to feel out of control most of the time and know you need help, then reach out for professional help.

Take care, be safe, and be extra kind to yourself in these times.