

An expert's guide to fighting coronavirus stress

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The new coronavirus is not just a physical health threat. The stress,

anxiety, fear and isolation that go along with it also take a toll on your mental well-being.

"One of the basic tenets of how to manage your [mental health](#) in a crisis like this is to ensure that you're taking care of your own basic needs—taking breaks, having rest and sleep, getting [adequate nutrition](#), exercising and having compassion for yourself and others," said Dr. Itai Danovitch. He's chairman of the department of psychiatry and behavioral neurosciences at Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles.

Danovitch suggested creating a daily schedule with separate blocks of time to work, relax, play and eat.

"It helps to ensure that the day doesn't get consumed by worrying, because our fear and our worries, when we don't have control over them, can sometimes have the effect of overtaking other activities," Danovitch said.

He said it's important to acknowledge your emotions—it's OK to worry and it's OK to have fear.

"On the other hand, we want to try to put a container around them so that they don't consume all the other components of the day," Danovitch said in a Cedars-Sinai news release. "We want to be deliberate about trying to have those other experiences that we talked about—[self-care](#) and connection."

When seeking news and information about the pandemic, be sure it's from trustworthy sources, such as your local public health agencies and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Getting [accurate information](#) includes accepting areas where there is uncertainty," Danovitch said. "It also includes responding to areas where

there's very clear direction from trusted authorities and experts."

Optimism and compassion are vital. Consider calling or video-chatting with people who are isolated or otherwise at risk for mental [health](#) struggles. He said listening with empathy and compassion is very powerful.

"Bearing witness to what they're going through, by connecting with them and letting them know that we are there for them, even if we're not there physically, I think we help each other out," Danovitch said.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Mental Health has more on [coping with coronavirus](#).

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