

Not *If* But *When* You Are Afraid



FOSTERING COURAGE AND RESILIENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

by Heres Snjider

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We recognize that fear is everywhere. The invisible corona virus heightens fears of disease, infection, dying, losing touch of financial losses or ruin. Scriptures back up this reality check that to be afraid is not a matter of *if*, but of *when*: more than three hundred versions of “do not be afraid” appear in Scriptures. These aim to replace fear with focus on the fact that God is with us, right in the middle of this scary pandemic. Grace based Counselling helps push through this reality check and offers strategies to ‘not be afraid’ to the point that it paralyzes or overcomes us.

Talk to God! When we draw near to God, He will draw near to us, forever. Jesus directed us to share all our anxieties with him and offered His peace of mind in exchange. The apostle Paul, a seasoned expert in trauma survival and recovery, encouraged us to pray 24/7.[1]

Increase Other-Talk. When anxious, sleep deprived and not functioning well, consider the option of counselling services via digital means. Thankfully there are many safe, confidential platforms available that offer quality counselling opportunities, and countless people benefit from the gift of technology. Be encouraged to connect with us at [Cascade Christian Counselling](#) with any questions or concerns regarding this.

"When we ruminate, we tend to filter out the positives and dwell on the negatives of any given situation."

Talk Back to your tears. Grieving well includes allowing and creating plenty of space for tears. Grieving well is the hard work of refusing to be overcome by self-pity. Talking back to your tears is fueled by courage and commitment to overcome difficult situations. It is realizing that, in the word of Bruce Cockburn, *nothing worth having comes without some kind of fight/got to kick at the darkness 'til it bleeds daylight.*[2]

Reduce self-talk when anxious, depressed or isolated. Self-talk may lead to automatic thought patterns that, unawares, may lead us to view reality in an unbalanced way. When we ruminate, we tend to filter out the positives and dwell on the negatives of any given situation. Self-talk may also cause us to catastrophize by anticipating that the very worst possible scenario will likely come about. Fortunately, even bad situations do not rob us of our capacity to choose. It is up to us whether we allow our anxiety to control us or us take control of our anxiety. We can press the 'pause button' of our thoughts and realize that we do not need to believe every anxious thought we think, and fear driven emotion we feel at 'face' value.

Talk to your soul. *Soul-talk is modeled in Scripture, (Ps. 42/3, 103, 146).* It is quite like instructing your soul to sit up and listen. It is preaching the Gospel to your own soul: *"The same sovereignty that could stop the coronavirus, yet doesn't, is the very sovereignty that sustains the soul in it."*[3]

[1] James 4:8, 2 Cor. 11: 23-27, 1 Thess. 5:17.

[2] Bruce Cockburn - Lovers in a dangerous Time.-Stealing Fire, 1984.

[3] John Piper, Coronavirus and Christ. Copyright© 2020, Desiring God Foundation, Crossway 1300 Crescent Street Wheaton, Illinois 60187 p.24

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STRESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

by Leanne VanderMeer

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You may have found yourself using the word “stressed” a lot, as you take on the role of a homeschool teacher, wait in an hour-long lineup, or consider your finances. According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, stress can be organized into three categories: positive, tolerable, and toxic (CDC, 2000). These categories are not about the stressful event itself, but rather the support that is received and the effect the stress has on our bodies. For children, support comes through positive adult relationships; for adults, support can generalize to those closest to you who are similar in age..

Positive Stress refers to brief and necessary challenges a person faces as they grow, such as learning to tie shoelaces, or giving a presentation in class. This kind of stress allows us to grow and learn new skills. We are supposed to experience positive stress for healthy development.

Tolerable Stress refers to unavoidable tragedies that are a part of life, such as a loved one dying or a natural disaster. In these cases, if the experience is time-limited and the person has supportive, caring relationships to help navigate the stress, the brain and body recover and continue to function well.

Toxic Stress refers to severe and prolonged exposure to abuse or neglect, often in the case of a caregiver to a child. These situations can lead to long-lasting effects in all areas of wellness.

Toxic Stress retrieved from [Center on the Developing Child \(2000\)](#)

The effects of COVID-19 fall within the category of Tolerable Stress. We can recover well from this stress with adequate time and support. Since the pandemic is a worldwide experience, we also have a unique opportunity to connect with our community. When we feel that our experiences are shared, our stress is lowered and our anxiety decreases. While we can be hopeful that we will recover from this tolerable stress, we must still recognize it for what it is: stress. The change we have experienced brings with it a significant amount of grief and loss. Remember to be kind to yourself and others. At regular points in the day, take a deep breath in and a long breath out. Continue doing this, bringing to mind others who are going through a similar situation. Focus on those individuals that you have, or could have, contact with. Set yourself small goals of connection, and be patient as you go throughout your day.

