

## Tip Sheet:

# Coping Day-to-Day with COVID-19 Uncertainty

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We are currently living in a very uncertain world with the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation. Not knowing what will happen next or worrying whether we or one of our family members might get sick, is likely to create anxiety and fear. This can be especially distressing in the context of also coping or caring for someone with cancer.

We must now adapt our day-to-day routines to include social distancing, working remotely and for many, limiting our direct contact with those we love. Given how isolating this time can be, DFCI wants to provide you with some basic tips to help you cope, paying particular attention to your emotional health and well-being.

Whether you are a patient, caregiver, staff member or a recently bereaved family member, these tips can help you manage uncertainty, anxiety and fear.

- **Create a new routine**

*doing so provides a structure to your day and increases your sense of control*

- Aim to get out of bed at the same time each day
- Plan your day in 'chunks' of time – consider categories such as meals, work, study, exercise, housework and connecting online with friends and family
- Plan for a repeating 'weekday' and 'weekend' routine
- Use your calendar to schedule tasks and activities even with yourself
- Write a daily 'to-do' list and check off items as you complete them

- **Stay Connected**

*this is especially important given we now need to limit our personal contact with others*

- Increase your use of technology to stay in touch with those you would typically see in person
- Consider online platforms with video modalities – seeing others really increases a sense of connection
- Think outside the box when it comes to social connections
  - Start a family or friend group chat or with your neighbors, as a way to check in
  - Invite your friends to an online social gathering
  - Do activities together using technology, such as singing, playing a game, or having a meal

- Consider checking in more regularly by phone or text for example, with those who are very isolated, such as the elderly or people living alone
- Consider outside activities at a social distance, such as a walk
- **Pay attention to your self-care**  
*this is even more important in times of heightened stress and vulnerability*
  - Practice increased hygiene, especially hand-washing with soap
  - Pay attention to good nutrition as stress impacts your desire to eat
  - Limit your alcohol intake
  - Listen to music
  - Do something creative
  - Exercise your mind and learn something new
  - Keep a journal of your thoughts and feelings
  - Try an online relaxation or meditation app
  - Start a gratitude list – what one or two things are you grateful for today?
- **Limit media exposure**  
*this is one thing you can control*
  - Stick to reliable sources for information about COVID-19, such as the WHO, CDC or local government agencies
  - Limit the amount of time you are interacting with the news each day – this is especially true if children are in the home
  - Consider restricting your news coverage to a regularly scheduled hour of your day
  - Only post or forward information to others that comes from a reliable source
- **Check your thinking**  
*the way we think affects the way we feel and behave*
  - Examine your thinking by asking yourself some simple questions:
    - Is my thinking contributing to my anxiety or stress?
    - What thoughts are making me most distressed?
    - How can I shift my thinking to support my well being while still having my honest thoughts?
  - Write down your worrying thoughts and your answers to the questions above and try to stick to the facts
  - Consider doing this exercise in conversation with a friend

- **Reach out**

- ***Don't worry alone***

- Call a friend
- Call a national hotline
- Arrange to speak to a counselor over the phone
- Seek information from reliable organizations about particular concerns, for example, how to speak to children or elderly parents about COVID-19

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