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Coping with Anxiety During the COVID-19 Pandemic

University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix clinical assistant professor of Psychiatry Alena S. Petty, DO, answers common questions about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Should people stop seeking mental health care during this time?

This time of stress and confusion is definitely not the time to stop mental health care. Although many offices are reducing in-person appointments, most are offering telephone or virtual video sessions to follow physical distancing guidelines while maintaining availability to support those in need. There are also several wellness iPhone apps that provide free services, especially to health care workers.

What should someone do to cope if they cannot work from home?

Maintain physical distance, wash hands, and remember that the vast majority of people who get the coronavirus have only mild symptoms.

Is it important to practice mindfulness during this time?

It is always a good time to practice mindfulness! A guided mindfulness program can start with just a couple of minutes, and more regular practice will allow you to apply mindfulness to help stay calm during stressful events. Here are some helpful resources:

- Mindful.org: an online resource for beginners to mindfulness
- Headspace: a guided meditation app
- Insight Timer: a meditation timer with guided meditations

Are there ways to embrace a more mindful approach to working from home?

Definitely. Using mindfulness techniques while working from home can help reduce distractions and keep focused. Following a schedule, using a dedicated space and scheduling breaks can help maintain productivity.

For those who do not experience anxiety normally, what would you tell someone who is experiencing ‘virus anxiety’?

Consider limiting time checking or watching the news, remember that most people who get the coronavirus will have only mild symptoms, and maintain good self-care.

