



Guide to Surviving Pandemic Level Stress

The coronavirus pandemic has everyone on edge. Even the adrenaline junkies aren't appreciating not knowing what the future holds for us. I have been anxious and stressed, had to cancel my vacation, and have been torn about how to handle my house call practice. I've had my relief schedule cut and have missed out on two speaking engagements (so far). I'm one of the lucky ones. Here are some things that are helping me cope with this chaos. I hope they help you, too.

- ✓ Breathe. Making knee-jerk decisions rarely has positive results. Remember that you can change your course if decisions you make aren't working. Be flexible. Adapting to change is the name of the game right now.
- ✓ Use your resources. Hopefully you've surrounded yourself with professionals who can help. Consult (ON THE PHONE PLEASE) your accountant, banker, financial advisor, doctor, lawyer. Let them help you make a plan. In many cases you can get a loan, apply for unemployment, and have your bills postponed. Jump on it so you don't miss the opportunity.
- ✓ Limit your social media. There is a sinkhole of misery waiting there, much of which is inaccurate. I like data. Johns Hopkins and state departments of health are good resources for numbers. Take a peek if you must, but constant reading of people's opinions.....well, that way lies madness. If you have productive things to do on SM, go ahead. Otherwise, there are a million better ways to spend your valuable time.
- ✓ Food. Water. Exercise. Sleep. Keep your defenses up. Please don't set unrealistic expectations. Go easy on yourself. Aim for walking around the block or doing some yoga, not winning a weightlifting contest (they're canceled, and the gyms are closed anyway). Get some nature every day if you can. If you're staying home, make meals double sized so you can freeze some for later and save yourself some work.
- ✓ Don't catastrophize. Concentrate on being safe and healthy. Rest as much as you can.
- ✓ Keep it light. Maybe this isn't the best time to watch *Outbreak* or *Contagion*. Watch, listen to, or do things that make you feel relaxed and happy. It's ok to laugh.
- ✓ Grieve if you need to. This pandemic is taking lives and health. But it's also taking jobs, businesses, graduations, weddings, funerals, vacations, and our contact with our loved ones. No matter what you're missing out on, it's ok to be sad and angry about it. Don't complain to someone in worse shape than you, but don't discount your feelings because your life isn't tragic enough.
- ✓ If you were prepared with savings and a disaster plan, don't hesitate to use them.
- ✓ Make plans. If you weren't prepared, don't spend your time chasing bad scenarios. Instead, think about what you wish you had in place. Then start working toward having it ready for next time. Forgive yourself for any decisions you now regret.
- ✓ Reach out to the people who lift you up. Limit your interaction with people who are bringing you down. I don't know about you, but I'm snoozing A WHOLE LOT of people on social media right now. I don't need to be any more stressed than I already am.
- ✓ Look for the good. It's out there.