



## Coping with Crisis in the Media (Part 1)

The news can be full of stories about unexpected or bad things like natural disasters, disease threats, bombings, kidnappings and war. In relation to COVID-19, it is very difficult not to be bombarded with worst case scenarios. All forms of news are consistently talking about it - on your phone, TV, the newspaper e.t.c.

The scary thing is that it may seem like this disease is happening all around you, even in places where you feel secure - like your university campus, shopping centres and at home. Seeing the constant stories on TV or even experiencing stories of them firsthand cause you to feel uncertain, worried or scared. These feelings may last even after the event is over.

Here are some tips to understanding the news and what you see and hear:

- ❖ **The news doesn't talk about everyday activities.** Instead, the news talks about things that are out of the ordinary - both good and bad. Sometimes it seems like the news captures more of the bad stuff - things like tragedies and crime. For example, if a plane crashes, it will get a lot of attention in the news - so much so, that you may think planes crash all the time. In fact, thousands of planes take off and land safely each day - the news just doesn't talk about those.
- ❖ **Sometimes you see stories over and over** about tragic events like bombings, or disasters such as floods or earthquakes. This doesn't mean these things are happening all the time - it just means that the news is talking about it again. The news will cover something when it first happens and then repeat the story. You may see it on the news in the morning and then again at night. After the first day, the news may do what is called a *follow-up story* to tell you what happened after the event. Therefore, you may hear about the same thing for a few days, even though it only happened once.
  - Although COVID-19 is an on-going event, there is a plethora of news stories on past events as well. Stories are repeated, altered slightly and republished. Old information can be detrimental so try to stay up to date on new occurrences and announcements
- ❖ **Bad things in the news can alert you to what is going on around you.** For example, a news story could tell you about someone in your community who is breaking into homes. While this may scare you, just remember that even though it's on the news, that doesn't mean it will happen to you. Stories like this can help make you aware of your surroundings and of things you can do to protect yourself (like locking your doors).
  - **In the case of COVID-19**, this is things like washing your hands, looking after those around you, and not hoarding in shopping centres are all

important to stay up to date on. Listen to advice from professionals on how best to slow down the spread.

- ❖ **Disasters or tragic events can bring out the best in people.** Firefighters, police officers and healthcare workers are doing their jobs (like saving people), and volunteers and everyday citizens also are there to help. You will see people in your community volunteering to bring food and clothing to help those who are affected, families coming together to help each other out and shelters being put into place to give people a place to stay. You can get involved too!

It is normal to be concerned about what you hear in the news. However, it is important to know that while things may seem uncertain for a while, your life usually will return to normal fairly soon.

If you have questions about any of the information included in the above factsheet or feel overwhelmed or stressed, please contact the 24/7 Veretis EAP line to speak to our team at 1300 878 379.



\*\* Veretis provides mental health and counselling support. The general information provided is in regard to how best to look after yourself mentally. It does not provide the reader with specific direction, advice, or recommendations. For medical advice please consult a medical health provider and government policies.

Additional Information retrieved from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, BAM! Body and Mind (Updated 2015, 9 May). *News you can use* [Global Edit]. Retrieved 22 April 2019 from <https://www.cdc.gov>



## Coping with Crisis in the Media (Part 2)

### Weave your own safety net

Following these tips can help you get on with your day-to-day life, even during stressful times.

- ❖ **Talk to your friends and your family and spend time with them.** If you find yourself feeling unsafe, uncertain, worried, or scared, or if you don't understand what is going on around you, talk to your family, friends, or a counsellor. There is a wide variety of people who can help explain these events so you can understand things better. By talking with your friends and your family, you can share your feelings and know you are not alone. Plus, spending time with them may help you feel more safe and secure.
- ❖ **Help out others.** Sometimes when you are concerned about what is going on around you, it is helpful to give others support. You can help out by raising money or donating clothes, or supporting an organisation that helps people affected by war, terrorism, or natural disasters. Even if you and your family are the ones who are affected, helping others can help you deal with your own stress – it may make you feel a little more in control.
- ❖ **Write down your feelings.** Writing your feelings down – in a diary, a journal, or even on a piece of scrap paper—is a great way to get things off of your chest. You can write down how you feel, what's going on in your life, or anything else!
- ❖ **Stick to your normal routine.** There is comfort in the little things you do every day – so keep on doing them! Take care of yourself. Get lots of sleep, eat well, and be physically active.
- ❖ **Take a break from the TV news.** Watch a funny movie, get together with friends, or read a funny book or magazine. Too much information about disasters can get you down, so try a change of pace. Did you know that smiling has been proven to improve your mood? That can help you feel like new and take your mind off things for a while.

Sometimes things happen that you just can't anticipate, as is the case with COVID-19, or the natural disasters that have occurred earlier this year. Being prepared can help you feel like you have more control in an emergency and help you feel less stressed.

- ❖ **Make a plan.** Talk to others about being prepared. If you are exposed to someone who is infected, you may need to go into self isolation or

quarantine. Choose a place to go, who you would call, or what you would do. Make sure to talk about what you should do if you are at school or at work.

- ❖ **Have an emergency supply kit.** If you end up needing to self isolate or quarantine, you may not be able to leave your home. Work to put together a supply kit for such emergencies. Some things to have on hand include water and non-perishable foods such as crackers, peanut butter, and canned food (soup, fruit, veggies, etc.). Make sure to have a battery-powered radio, flashlights, and extra batteries on hand. A first-aid kit, facial tissue, and toilet paper are good things to consider packing. Lanterns (lamp oil) or candles for light are good things to have, too. Also, don't forget about your family pet. Pack extra water and food for your four-legged friends.

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