

Five Good Habits To Build in Uncertain Times

Habit #1: Build your anxiety awareness

Whenever you notice that something triggers stress or anxiety, nip it in the bud before it feeds on itself by doing two things: First take a few deep breaths or ground your awareness in your feet for 30 seconds. Count up to 30 if you need to, to make sure you don't cut this short. This will help you stay calm. Second, notice any urges to go on social media or call someone. Don't pick up the phone if you're freaked out. Prevent the spread of anxiety via social contagion. Now ask yourself "What do I get from this?"

Habit #2: Make connection the new infection

If you feel the urge to pick up the phone or go on social media ask yourself, what do I need right now (not what do I want). Often we simply need connection. Spread connection by giving your spouse or kids a solid hug, or cuddle with your pet if you have one or if you are calm, phone a friend.

Habit #3: Don't get addicted to checking the news

Your brain treats the news like a slot machine, so don't "go to the casino." Set limits of checking 2-3 times a day, and like cutting off caffeine and alcohol intake in the evening so you can sleep, do not check the news before going to bed. Also, just like smokers are deprived of nicotine after sleeping and jones for a morning cigarette, if you find yourself craving news when you first wake up in the morning, don't check as the first thing you do.

Habit #4: Take it one day at a time

Remember your brain doesn't like uncertainty, and it gets stuck in "what if" habit loops when it tries to plan for the future. You need information to plan. You probably don't have enough information to plan for next month, or even two weeks from now. Practice taking it day by day, or even hour by hour to keep you calm and thinking.

Habit #5: Nourish yourself with kindness

There's a meme going around that people will either lose 50 or gain 100 pounds when all of this is over. Do make sure you nourish yourself with healthy food. If you need a new vice, turn to kindness instead of ice cream. It is sweeter and doesn't give you a belly ache from eating too much. See my kindness video for specific tips on how to practice kindness toward yourself and others.

Let's make lemonade out of these lemons we've been given. During these uncertain and trying times, work to build healthy mental habits that will help you not only today, but the rest of your life.

Onward together!

— Dr. Jud Brewer