

## **How to cope with health anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic**

[Truc Nguyen](#) · CBC Life · Posted: Mar 16, 2020 6:31 PM ET (suggestions from Dr. Martin Antony, Psychologist)

It's completely normal to experience health anxiety right now, in the midst of a global pandemic.

### **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques that might help right now**

Use a 'thought record' strategy to help you identify your negative thought, the evidence in favour and the evidence that contradicts that thought, and help you look at things from different perspectives. The goal here is to arrive at a more balanced, flexible way of looking at the situation.

Trying to think about problems in a different way can help you manage your health anxiety. Some people with a positive problem orientation assume that most problems can be solved and see them as challenges to be overcome, whereas other people might see problems in a much more negative light, as things to be avoided at all cost. Try to think about problems as challenges to be solved, not unsolvable events over which they have no control.

Once you shift the way you look at problems, there are five main steps for actually trying to solve them. Step one is identifying the problem; step two is brainstorming possible solutions; step three is evaluating the solutions by looking at the potential costs and benefits; step four is choosing and implementing the best solution; and step five is evaluating how it went. These are things that many of us just do naturally all the time. But for some people, when they get overwhelmed with a particular problem, it may not be as obvious to them exactly what steps they need to take to solve it.

Other behavioural techniques, including mindfulness meditation and [relaxation-based strategies](#) like slowing down your breathing, can also help you feel less anxious. Social support and exercise can be very useful for managing stress as well; even though we're being encouraged to practice [social distancing](#), it can be helpful to connect with the people you care about using technology such as FaceTime or Skype.

Find an information balance and limit your exposure to the news. Access reliable sources for your information.

Know that this situation is temporary

Accept some level of anxiety right now, knowing that it's temporary.

Sometimes it is much easier to deal with anxiety that's shared — we're all going through this situation together, so try to make use of available social support.