



Helpful Thinking During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak

The table below is organized by concerns that are likely to occur in response to disease outbreaks, including safety, feeling unable to cope, helplessness, guilt, and anger. For each category, unhelpful thoughts and the negative feelings that go with them are followed by more helpful thoughts and their potential resulting positive feelings. Use the table to identify thoughts you might be having now, and helpful thoughts you can try instead. *Then, it's important to practice using more helpful thoughts as often as you can.*

Safety			
Common Unhelpful Thoughts	How You May Feel	Alternate Helpful Thoughts	How You'll Feel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The world is a dangerous place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scared Worried Not trusting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The world can be dangerous, but there are things I can do to enhance safety. Change is the only guarantee in life. Sometimes, when things go wrong, the only thing we can control is our reactions. The world is not always dangerous. Most of the time I'm safe. I can trust... (e.g., that things usually work out; that I can handle things even if they don't work out; in God; in others; in myself; in life). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hopeful Open to a better future Trusting that people will help Calmer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can't trust anyone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lonely Withdrawn Suspicious Sad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trusting people is why I'm getting help. I can choose some people to trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More trusting Less suspicious Hopeful Optimistic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm not safe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worried Scared Insecure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling unsafe isn't the same as being unsafe. Something bad happened, but it doesn't mean it'll last forever, or happen again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More relaxed Confident Capable More secure

Helplessness and Control

<i>Common Unhelpful Thoughts</i>	<i>How You May Feel</i>	<i>Alternate Helpful Thoughts</i>	<i>How You'll Feel</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am too scared to do anything because I might get infected. I am going to infect others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immobilized Helpless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can gather information, set priorities, adapt my plans and carry out the most important necessities in ways that are safe. I am doing the best I can to keep both myself and my family safe. I can find ways to express love and be connected in ways that are safe for us all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reassured Capable Stronger
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Things will never be the same again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sad Regretful Hopeless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling really bad usually doesn't last forever. Thinking like this makes it hard to plan for the future. Not everything will be like it was before. But some things are the same now. Even though things may never be the same, I can grow from what is happening and adapt to changing life circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open to the future Hopeful Accepting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have no control over anything. I have to stay home all the time. This is a huge setback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helpless Not caring or giving up Confused Frustrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can control some decisions about my future. Doing things gives me more control. Talking to a someone about what I'm feeling shows I have some control. There are many things I can do, so I'll focus on those instead of what is out of my control. There have been setbacks but focusing only on them gets in the way of my bigger priorities. Every setback or obstacle can be an opportunity to improve things in my life. I can use this time to strengthen my faith / values / practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like you have a purpose Hopeful, capable Able to set goals or take steps Less helpless

Coping			
<i>Common Unhelpful Thoughts</i>	<i>How You May Feel</i>	<i>Alternate Helpful Thoughts</i>	<i>How You'll Feel</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I should be coping better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helpless Useless Scared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I got here today, so I'm coping a bit. Talking to a friend, mentor, or counsellor might help me cope better. Most people are struggling to cope in this new context. We're all doing the best we can. I can use this time to strengthen my skills / faith / values / practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less scared More hopeful Less helpless Stronger Capable Open to getting support or help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My reactions mean I'm going crazy. Something must be really wrong with me. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scared Worthless Negative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These reactions are temporary. Most people react like this. Things are hard for many people now. Even though my mind tells me that I'm not coping well, that doesn't mean I have to listen to it or agree I can ignore thoughts that aren't helpful and choose to focus on more helpful thoughts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reassured Capable Hopeful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other people deal with this better than I do, so what's wrong with me? Only weak people react the way I do. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worthless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most people react this way for a while. My reaction shows the challenge I'm going through, not how weak I am. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reassured Capable Stronger

Guilt			
<i>Common Unhelpful Thoughts</i>	<i>How You May Feel</i>	<i>Alternate Helpful Thoughts</i>	<i>How You'll Feel</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm a bad person for letting this happen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guilty Worthless Like you hate yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A bad person wouldn't feel guilty about this. The reason I feel bad is because I care. I did the best I could with the information I had at the time. We all make mistakes. I can forgive myself and learn from what happened. I can use this time to strengthen my skills / faith / values / practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like you aren't to blame Worthy Self-accepting

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I should have prevented this. • I should have done something differently. • I am disappointed in myself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guilty • Worthless or Blaming • Frustrated • Upset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nobody could have prevented this. • I can't always protect myself or others. • There was limited information about how to prevent this at the time it happened. • I had to make difficult decisions and didn't realize the extent of danger at the time. • I had few options at the time. • I did the best I could given that: I was exhausted; I was dealing with a lot; I was operating with limited resources; I was pressed for time, etc. • There are many things I'm grateful for, so I'll focus on those instead of what is bothering me. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-accepting • Worthy • Like you aren't to blame
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Blame and Anger			
<i>Common Unhelpful Thoughts</i>	<i>How You May Feel</i>	<i>Alternate Helpful Thoughts</i>	<i>How You'll Feel</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's unfair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry • Vengeful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could have happened to someone else. • Sometimes bad things happen to good people. • Even though it's unfair, the way I'm expressing my anger is not going to help me get what I want and/or need. • It might be unfair, but if I continue to be angry, it is getting in the way of my bigger priorities (e.g., helping my children feel safe). • There are many things I'm grateful for, so I'll focus on those instead of what is bothering me. • I can use this time to strengthen my faith / values / practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding • Realistic • Accepting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's their fault this happened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry • Frustrated • Vengeful • Blaming • Not trusting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blaming others doesn't change my situation. • Others may be to blame, but I need to focus my energy on me and my family. • Later, my anger will motivate me to try to do something to change the things I'm angry about, but at the moment, I need to focus on what I can accomplish in my immediate circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting • Optimistic • More trusting • Better able to move on

Adapted from Berkowitz, S., Bryant, R., Brymer, M., Hamblen, J., Jacobs, A., Layne, C., Macy, R., Osofsky, H., Pynoos, R., Ruzek, J., Steinberg, A., Vernberg, E., Watson, P., National Center for PTSD and National Child Traumatic Stress Network, *Skills for Psychological Recovery: Field Operations Guide, 2010*. Available on: www.nctsn.org and www.ptsd.va.gov.