Take charge of coronavirus-related anxiety

The coronavirus (also called COVID-19) is in the news daily, with the number of cases rising and varied health recommendations based on location. It is increasingly important to stay focused and take measure of your situation and feelings. Normally you are a person who manages life's ups and downs with relative ease, but this news is causing you stress and generally hindering your daily life.

An evolving, ongoing event such as the threat of a health emergency can cause people to feel anxiety, even when they normally don't. Symptoms of anxiety include:

- Intense worry
- Fatigue
- Panic
- Obession
- Nightmares
- Muscle tension
- Headaches
- Sleep problems
- Rapid heart rate
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Sweating

The good news is that there are steps you can take to address your anxiety around the coronavirus or any other stressful situation.

1. **Take control of the situation.** There are preventive measures you can take to limit your susceptibility to the coronavirus, such as washing your hands; not touching your eyes, nose and mouth; and disinfecting your home and work area. For more suggestions, refer to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) websites.

2. **Take care of yourself.** Eat nutritious food, exercise, limit alcohol consumption and make sleep a priority. Stay connected with family and friends so that you're not socially isolated.

3. **Stay informed by learning the facts.** The news isn't always accurate. Be sure to get your information from authoritative sources, such as the CDC and the WHO.

4. **Think about the impact you have on others**. Be sure to care for yourself and take preventative measures more seriously. Communicating with family and friends about those measures is a form of positively affecting others.

5. **Limit your media exposure to coronavirus news.** Today's news cycle is 24 hours, and the exposure can be overwhelming, regardless of the topic.

6. **Let it go.** Don't dwell on what may or may not happen regarding the coronavirus. Change what you can and let the rest take its course. Refocus your mind and think only about positive things.

If your stress and anxiety persist in spite of taking these recommended steps, contact your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or your primary care physician who may refer you to a behavioral health specialist. Another option is to call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990, a 24/7, 365 day-a-year, free national hotline that provides immediate crisis counseling. It is toll-free, multilingual and confidential.