

Anxiety - how to deal with it in the difficult times?

In the current situation many of us experience various difficult emotions. One of them is anxiety which appears as a natural reaction of the body to a threat. And although anxiety is perceived as something destructive and negative, as emphasized by Dr. Ewa Pragłowska (doctor of humanities, specialist in clinical psychology, psychotherapist and supervisor of psychotherapy), it is also a "life-giving emotion". It might have a constructive effect because it makes us make rational decisions and strategies that are supposed to protect us, e.g. we stay at home, we follow the recommendations to avoid infection. On the other hand it is also natural that our body tries to return to a state of relative balance because prolonged stress can adversely affect, among others, cortisol levels which in the case of persistently high levels weakens our immune system. Many people are therefore looking for answers on how to reduce anxiety, which is felt as a strongly unpleasant emotion, especially if it is accompanied by other additional emotions such as sadness (e.g. due to prolonged isolation and inability to spend time with loved ones), longing (for past activities, family), anger or anxiety about the future (e.g. for a job). All this means that we want to push away unpleasant feelings as far as possible. While it is not possible to consciously cut off our emotions

(and it would not even be beneficial in the long run) you can try to "tame" the emotions felt and reduce the level of anxiety you experience. Below are suggestions that can help with this.

1. Follow the instructions and procedures (washing your hands, keeping clear of other people, staying at home, etc.). This has a positive effect on the feeling of control. It is also worth recognizing that in the current situation staying at home is not a compulsion but our decision, which we consciously and maturely make to increase our chances of staying healthy. This attitude gives us a sense of impact on our lives and this is something that we, as people, need invariably.
2. Direct your thoughts. The way we think affects our emotions. If we worry a lot about what will happen, fear also increases. It is worth thinking about what we have a real influence on, and in a situation where we involuntarily focus on worries, you can try to shift your attention to cognitive activities that will stop our race of thoughts and help us balance.

3. Name the emotions. Although it seems trivial naming emotions allows you to sort them out and accept them.
4. Plan your day. The excess of unstructured time does not have a positive effect on our well-being, it also gives space for worry. We function better when the day runs according to a set rhythm of activity and rest. It is therefore worth planning time spent at home and creating an activity schedule (for work, meal, or free time).
5. Organize your free time properly. Prolonged isolation can be troublesome for many and causes a sense of frustration. It can be especially difficult for children who need a lot of activity, movement, and contact with peers. It is important to remember that children model their behavior based on observing adults. How we approach the issue of organizing free time will also affect children. It is therefore worth spending time on activities that, until now, did not have space (e.g. learning to play a guitar, baking bread, reading books, watching a movie, etc.). Let's show our enthusiasm for children who, seeing our attitude, may also be more willing to undertake various activities. Let's use this time to play together, strengthen bonds, and get to know each other again.
6. Take only a limited amount of time to view and listen to information. View information at a designated time of day. Use reliable and proven sources. Do not focus on looking only for negative information but also read the positive ones.
7. Set a time to worry - this is an attempt to control, close our fears within a certain time frame: e.g. between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. Even though it might seem strange, with this approach, in the remaining time our anxiety may weaken.
8. Use stress-lowering techniques. As the body is a carrier of emotions, it is worth using methods that can reduce this tension. Breathing and relaxation techniques or visualization can be helpful.
9. Talk to loved ones. The current situation brings many dilemmas and difficult life situations e.g. related to separation or job issues. One of the better regulators of our emotions in such moments is contact and conversation with another person. The feeling of closeness and emotional support is a very important aspect in dealing with felt tension and anxiety. It is worth bearing in mind that not only physical closeness

and accessibility are important but also an emotional relationship. Current technology gives many opportunities to communicate with people who share geographical distance. That's why it's worth calling friends, family, or older people. Often older people need to hear the message that they are important to us.

10. Don't give up on psychological or psychotherapeutic support. Therapists can provide online consultations. This is especially important for people who are already in the therapeutic process. However, also for those who feel that this is the moment to help themselves, it is worth following this feeling.

Let's remember that how we deal with anxiety will also affect our loved ones. It is not without reason that emotions are said to be contagious. This is especially true for children who are largely influenced by the parents' mood. If a child sees that a parent uses constructive mechanisms to deal with anxiety then in parallel it will also be easier for him or her to use available resources.

Remember, however, that we do not have to pretend to loved ones that it is not difficult for us. The real situation we are in is unique and maybe very aggravating. Recognizing its seriousness and naming things will help us and our loved ones

cope with it or at least allow to better understand our reactions. Talking and dealing with fear is much more important than saying "don't worry" or "don't be afraid". It is worth confronting what we are afraid of and thus make the situation real.

It is also worth noting that being in quarantine and far from our previous life may make us lose a proper perspective of time. We may feel that what's "here and now" will last forever with no space left for thinking about a better future. It seems extremely important for the sentence spoken by Dr. Ewa Pragłowska to resound:

"Now we have been deprived of part of our lives, our everyday lives. It is very difficult, but it is so that we can have this life later. That we could enjoy it and use it safely. That condition which is now is just a moment. "

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