



Tackling anxiety and fear in the Coronavirus Pandemic

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Louise Morse shares some great ways for helping us manage during isolation and social upheaval.

Isolation is not natural for human beings, writes Louise Morse – we are not designed for it. In times of crisis, such as we are experiencing with Covid-19, our instinct is to group together. Yet here we are, millions of us, isolating ourselves even from close family members to prevent the spread of the disease, while at the same time being bombarded with horrifying headlines. So it's no surprise that many people are feeling anxious and fearful.

But it doesn't have to be like this. There are things that we can do, some seemingly simple, but with known, powerful effects. My experience of cognitive behavioural therapy is that it wonderfully reflects Scripture, so here I have combined some known mental health care techniques with God-given practices which can help us manage this challenging time.

In his lifetime, King David experienced isolation, and worse, and had discovered how to dismiss his anxiety and fears. He wrote,

“When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations delight my soul” Psalm 94:19

A whole book could be written about God's 'consolations', but the points to draw out for us in this present crisis are these:

- Remember the good things God has done for you. The Israelites put stones in the river Jordan as a memorial to the miraculous stopping of the river when they crossed. When we are anxious, we tend to forget the times God has intervened in our lives. It helps to write them down, and thank Him again, for each one.
- Find the Scripture verses that are full of God's promises to you, for example ... (You can find more examples at the end of the article). The Bible tells us that Scripture is “living and active” so write the verses out on post-it notes and stick them where you will see them during the day – and stop to read them. Psalm 139: 9-12 tells how God watches over us wherever we are, day and night, and Isaiah 43: 2 shows how God protects us as we go through the most difficult circumstances. These, and other verses are given at the end of this blog.



- Watch what you are thinking. We can choose the thoughts we allow to stay in our minds. “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” we’re told in Philippians 4:8. If fearful or negative thoughts persist, take them captive to Christ! (2 Corinthians 10). Either challenge it directly or give it in prayer to Christ.
- Encouraging others. Make telephone calls, send emails, write social media posts. You can begin by saying, “I was just remembering when ... (the person said or did something) and how much it meant to me.” You will have your own memories and words so find the little ways to share them; or you can simply say, “I’m thinking about you, and praying for you.”
- Accepting help from others. We can be so used to being independent that we can unwittingly pull up the drawbridge that lets people in to help us. When someone phones to ask if there’s anything they can get you from the shops, say “yes”! Even if it’s only a bar of soap. (It might even be toilet rolls!)
- Learn to spend a little time focusing on the small things. Notice how the sun’s rays through the windows light up the pattern in the carpet, or a picture – or even if it’s dust you can see, then the sunshine itself!
- Be grateful. Being grateful has a hugely therapeutic effect and there is so much we can be grateful for – for big and for little things. And when you think back and reflect on them, often the little things had longer-lasting effects than the big.
- Finally, worship. Music is known to be good for the brain, and worship music is good for our souls. Welsh pastor Selwyn Hughes, founder of Crusade for World Revival (CWR), believed that that in worship we enter into the presence of the Lord and His unity becomes our unity. He puts our fragmented, world-weary selves back together. Put on your favourite CD, tune in to Premier Radio or UCB radio, or look up your most treasured songs on YouTube or Spotify and worship!

Verses to look up: Isaiah 41:10, Psalm 46:1, Deuteronomy 31:8, Philippians 4:13, Psalm 139, Psalm 18:29, Psalm 138:8, Isaiah 54:10 – there are many more.

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