



5 Steps to Help You Mentally Cope With COVID-19

A nurse in Kansas City describes what it feels like to be a health care worker amid the COVID-19 pandemic: “It’s like being tied to a railroad track; you know the train is coming, but you can’t get out of the way.”

In a briefing of the St. Louis metropolitan pandemic task force, doctors included strategies to help with mental health. Washington University Psychology Professor Dr. Tim Bono and trauma therapist Dr. Richelle Moore provided these tips to focus on psychological well-being:

1. **Autonomy:** Concentrate on what you can control. Anxiety exists when we focus on future and past experiences, both of which are out of our control. It’s important for us to focus on behaviors that are in our control. Practice self-care. Exercise. Express gratitude. When you try to control the uncontrollable, it only weakens you.
2. **Competence:** Work toward accomplishing daily goals like going for a walk, cooking and even simple things, like making your bed. Oftentimes, the sense of satisfaction from completing a small task can motivate us to accomplish bigger ones.
3. **Relatedness:** Stay connected. Connecting with family and friends through video chat and phone calls lets you know your loved ones are OK and reminds you that you are not alone.

Dr. Bono and Craig Rooney, a counseling psychologist at Missouri University Hospital, advise to carry these two mindsets with you:

1. **Give yourself permission to be human.** No one is happy all the time. The happiest people have one thing in common: they know there are really hard times in life and when something bad happens, they acknowledge it and create good strategies to cope.

2. **Take things one day at a time.** When we are in a state of prolonged stress and uncertainty, people can get very anxious. It's important to focus on one day at a time to protect your mental health.