

Managing anxiety in the face of the unknown

- Human beings are meaning-makers, as Piaget noted. Our brains are hard-wired to make sense of things even when there isn't any, just as when we see images in cloud formations, or pictures of Elvis on burned slices of toast. We impose meaning in situations where things are ambivalent. In this way, it is very difficult for us not to get ahead of the facts when there are a lot of unknowns and when we realize we don't have control over things.
- Anxiety is worry over the future – not fear about the present, but fear about the future, the unknown, and the imagined. Because of this, we can help ourselves to manage and cope better by using classic mindfulness and grounding techniques. Bring your attention back to the present, the “NOW,” and your breath. Bring your attention back to one thing at a time in the right now. Be aware of your breathing, and count 5 things you can see with visual senses, 5 things you can hear with your auditory senses, 5 things you can feel with your tactile senses, and possibly 5 things you are aware of smelling. This process helps ground us in the right now and our sensory awareness, rescuing our consciousness from unhelpful projections about the future.
 - Make a list of things you can do that make you feel better and make sure to do at least one every day.
 - Be careful to limit your exposure to the 24-hour news cycle and the ways that this can increase your fears.
 - Do something nice for yourself and do something kind for someone else, even if you can't do it in person. Giving, altruism and gratitude help counteract anxiety
 - Stay in touch with friends and family regularly through email, social media, live video chat, and other methods. Social support is still important to wellbeing even if it is not face to face.
 - Use guided meditations and other audio programs to keep your mind centered on soothing yourself and increasing calm. All members of the W&J community has access to TAO Connect for self-help:
 - TAO Connect self-help:**
 - https://thepath.taoconnect.org/local/self_help/signup.php (use your W&J email address); the mindfulness exercises are at this link after you've registered: <https://thepath.taoconnect.org/course/view.php?id=127>
 - Yoga for calming anxiety**
 - <https://www.facebook.com/subtleyoga/videos/2361880664071709/>
 - Guided meditation by one of the best**
 - <https://www.tarabrach.com/meditation-practice-rain/>
 - **And, from our own Dr. Thomas Lindquist, this article about healing anxiety:**
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/overcoming-fear-walking-anxiety-thomas-lindquist-psy-d-atr>

Stay well and centered as much as you can and be kind to each other!