



Are your employees nervous about COVID19?

Are you nervous about the coronavirus? Maybe you're beyond nervous. Maybe you're anxious, and maybe you're flat terrified. Whether or not we're willing to admit it, most of us are, at the very least, a little unsettled. Please know, there's nothing wrong with that. In fact, if we deny our emotions, they begin to own us.

Fear is not a bad thing. It acts as an indicator light that alerts our senses and warns us that something dangerous may be ahead. The key is what we do when we notice that indicator light. We may not be able to control the feeling of fear, but we are definitely in charge of how we respond to it. When we feel the hairs on the back of our neck stand up or it seems our hearts skipped a beat, our minds are telling us to pay attention to what's going on around us. We've all heard it before – without a thought, our brains urge us to fight, to flee or to freeze.

Fight might look like over functioning, white knuckling our way to finding solutions, making plans, and yes, even hoarding toilet paper. Flight might look like endless hours of mindless activity such as facebook, instagram, or Netflix. Freeze may look like immobility, difficulty making decisions, or loss of desire to use the quarantine time productively.

What is the best way to respond, and how do we prevent fear from getting the best of us? First, we need to decide who and what we'll listen to. It's difficult to turn on the television, have a conversation, or open social media and NOT see something about corona. Trouble is, most of what is presented is heresay, paid news, and subjective reasoning. Limit how much time you allow yourself to focus on it, but more importantly, if the information doesn't come from the CD or local health department, it might be best to skip it all together.

Do yourself the favor and ignore the hype, the speculation, and the scary stories. Instead, listen to reason and to those who are studying the issue directly. They're out there and they've been providing sound information to help us understand this threat so we can protect ourselves and those we care for. Pay attention to their guidelines and make plans for what you need to do.

Second, focus on the things you can control instead of allowing yourself to become fearful of what's outside your control. Choose what you read, what you watch, who you listen to, and yes, even what you eat carefully. Resist the temptation to go on social media and get worked up by the nonsense people who don't know better are sharing. Instead, pick up a good book or relax to some of your favorite music. We can all control our attitude, our generosity,

what information we post and share, and we can all control the amount of grace we give to ourselves and to others who might be acting out of fear.

Third, never try to numb fear with alcohol, drugs, food, or other substances. They may offer what seems like temporary relief, but it's not true or lasting assistance. It's your mind tricking you into feeling better for a moment. You'll feel even worse after the moment passes and you'll crave more later. Trust us. We've seen the impact of the numbing on families, and it is never positive.

Then, answer your fear. Pause for a moment to recognize it and call it by name. Breathe fully, focusing on the outward breath. Ground yourself as a reminder that some things don't and won't change. Then stare that fear straight in the eye and tell it you know it's there, but you're going to move forward anyway, with grace, dignity, and calm. And if you need help doing so, phone a friend or your counselor to remind you of things that remain the same in the midst of the rapidly changing situation we're all facing. Remind yourself you're not alone in this. Remind yourself to look for the helpers, because we're out there waiting for you. And remind yourself that as scary as it feels, you ARE making it through this. One day at a time.

When you take those steps and move forward in positive ways, something unexpected begins to happen: Fear gives way to resolve. Anxiety calms in wake of grounding and striving pauses so that you can breathe again.

If you've been trying to get ahead of those fears and feel that you're falling short, you may benefit from a conversation with one of the professional counselors available to you. Care to Change is available by video or tele-health so that you can talk and find ways that work specifically for you and your situation related to these trying times. We are all in this together, so please take care of you so that we can be a stronger us.

Care to Change can be reached by calling or texting 317-790-9396 or by emailing help@caretochange.org