

Stressed, Anxious, Discouraged or Overwhelmed

By AD (Adrienne) Diers

Every person is unique in temperament, life circumstances, past experiences, reactions and emotions. These are trying times, and the stressors of our individual lives are compounding with world and national crises. These stressors are personal and collective. If you are feeling distressed, here's some words of hope and strategies to cope.

First of all, **you will be okay- You already are.** Life ebbs and flows, emotions rise and fall. **You are normal.** Things pass. Things get hard. Things heal. **Be kind and patient with yourself.** Experiment with relaxation techniques and grounding exercises to find the ones that resonate with you. Are there smells, music, places or activities that calm you or bring you joy? Remind yourself that **you have limits**, and let yourself rest in your current circumstances. Sometimes our cups overflow and life gets messy. "To do" lists may need to wait longer than usual, you may need a nap, you may want to push a "pause" button on something for the day, or week, or longer. **Be realistic** with what you can accomplish and don't "should" on yourself.

No two people cope the same way. So, **don't compare yourself with others** and their journey. Find your own pace and strategies and **don't do it alone.** Ask for help and ask for companionship. Don't wait for people to offer help, reach out. If you need a pep talk, ask. If you need reassurance, contact a trusted person. For example, text your best friend and say "please remind me that I'll be okay and that you love me". And tell them too! Reciprocate love and find laughter. Play a game with your family or roommate, meet with a friend, call or facetime someone who builds you up. Connecting with others is how our brains are wired to work. Find creative ways to connect during our continued social distancing. We benefit greatly from positive human interactions.

Also, **don't forget your body.** Gift yourself sleep. Never underestimate how healing sleep can be and learn sleep hygiene skills. Try to make healthy food choices, while allowing yourself treats too. Get up and moving at least a little bit every day. Even a short walk can feel rejuvenating. And pause to smell a rose, or watch a squirrel, pet a dog or listen to the birds. **Being in nature** can be very soothing. And don't forget your faith and spirituality. **Ground yourself in the practices that make you feel connected to your spirit and your faith.**

This pandemic, social and political unrest, natural disasters, financial burdens, and layered struggles are genuinely unprecedented. We are all in a difficult transition from what was once "normal" to what will be the future. On both personal and societal levels. Transitions can feel difficult and daunting. Courage, acceptance, surrender and resilience are our allies. Great potential for strength lies on the other side of suffering. Like a beautiful lotus emerging from thick mud or a majestic phoenix rising from its own ashes, humans are resilient creatures. We just need a little help along the journey sometimes. If you want extra support, please don't hesitate to reach out to a counselor to walk alongside you as you navigate the process of coping and growing. And I want to say once again from the bottom of my heart, no matter how lost or despaired or panicked you may feel: **YOU will be okay- YOU already are.**