



BHS Medical Department

Panic in Uncertain Times



Like disease, panic is a social contagion. People feel compelled to engage in behaviours they see others around them doing. It provides a sense of control when people feel surrounded by chaos. Panic breeds panic in fearful times, but there are strategies people can use to calm their personal panic levels and make it disappear in their communities. Decide: Am I going to be a part of this?

How does uncertainty affect anxiety in a crisis?

Feeling some level of stress or anxiety is healthy in a crisis because it helps individuals protect themselves. A component of this stress response is activating your body and your mind to mobilize for a threat. You do want some of that stress response activated so you are motivated. However, you don't want the stress to be at such a high level that it causes physical and mental health problems over time.

Too much stress can manifest in unhealthy ways:

- Interrupting sleep
 - Hindering daily tasks
 - Interfering with concentration
 - Stress and anxiety that are persistent prevent people from basic functioning become worrisome.
 - A pattern of catastrophic thinking or assuming the worst when you don't have full information.
- When all of those factors are occurring, that's a sign that they're really moving into that realm of unhealthy stress management.

What are the mental stages of a panic crisis?

People experience during a crisis:

- Uncertainty at the beginning of a crisis when there are more questions than answers.
- Fear and anxiety can help motivate people to take action.

- Fear of the unknown prevents people from taking action.
- Hopelessness is the feeling that nothing can be done to make a situation better, while
- Helplessness is the feeling that people have no power to improve their situation or protect themselves.
- Denial is refusing to acknowledge harm that has occurred or will occur.
- People enter denial when they do not have enough information, assume a situation is not dangerous, do not understand how to respond to a threat or behave as if they are not in danger.

To be continued with “Prevent Panic in Uncertain Times”

Ref: Weill Institute for Neurosciences

Ref: Public Health Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences