

How to Avoid Panic in a Pandemic: 5 Steps to Stay Safe (and Sane)

Stealth transmission. Self isolation. Social distance.

Our vocabulary has increased as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads across the United States.

Even now, as I send you a virtual high-five, the landscape is changing. Live-streamed Lenten worship isn't the same as singing in the middle of the altos. Talking with a grandchild on FaceTime doesn't compare with the warmth of little arms around us. Grocery delivery is appreciated, but the home shopper doesn't always select the ripest pineapple. And after a day of quarantine baking, even calorie-laden cupcakes lose their appeal.

Although age and chronic conditions escalate our risk, we can take concrete steps to avoid the coronavirus anxiety spiral:

1. **Reframe the current crisis by thinking through a longer timeframe.** How will things look next year at this time? We've lived through 911, the Challenger explosion, Columbine and countless other tragedies and disasters. Apply the "older adult lens" to consider the big picture.
2. **Practice critical thinking skills:** see through spin. Tune into credible news sources.
3. **Find a media balance.** Hearing or watching the constant stream of uncertainty only heightens distress. Be informed, but not overloaded.
4. **Tap into apps, websites or online exercises** when weather doesn't permit outdoor walking. Physical activity reduces stress and maintains health.
5. **Do pro-social activities from a distance.** Phone a friend, play an online game with a grandchild; read the same book as your brother and set a time to discuss it online or on the phone; use pen and paper to write letters to your grandchildren.

We are moving through uncharted waters. **Yet amid the chaos and confusion, God is present.** The Old Testament prophet, Elijah, looked for God in wind that shook a mountain, in an earthquake that shattered rocks and even in a fire. But when Elijah left his cave, he heard God speak in a soft whisper.

As we hunker down in our twenty-first century caves, we too, can listen and look for God. He walks among us even now.



ALOA Board of Directors

For the latest information from health experts:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[World Health Organization](#)

You'll find resources for many aspects of ministry to those in the second half of life in the resource section of ALOA's website. [Find resources](#)