



Fear in Times of Crisis or Uncertainty: Intensive (Self) Care by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

In a world that often seems to spin too fast, there are moments when global events cause unspeakable distress, or forces of Nature run wild in unpredictable and frightening ways. We have all learned in the 21st century that these may be acts of terror or natural catastrophes, economic crises or humanitarian tragedies. We now understand, as perhaps never before, how interdependent we humans really are and that we need to remain as healthy and whole, and as available to those who need us, as possible.

Below are some no-nonsense suggestions to help you through fearful moments. Some will feel more comfortable to you than others. Just do the best you can. It is my heartfelt hope that something here will bring you comfort.

1. Make your own health and wellness your daily gift to yourself, to your friends and family. They need you now, perhaps more than ever. So much is out of your control, but attention to your body-mind-spirit are not. Your physical wellness will support emotional strength.

2. Get as much factual information as possible, and try to disregard rumors. Maintain normalcy in your routine, wherever you can. Try not to allow your imagination to "*catastrophize*" when you do not know the facts. You will be told if there is an immediate problem, and you will deal with whatever may arise. But unless you know a problem is real, try hard to assume the best.

3. Put your body chemistry to work for you. Perhaps you can boost endorphins, serotonin, natural "feel-good" substances. Get some moderate, pleasurable exercise each day, even a walk around the block can increase the "*feel-good factor*." If you cannot go out, then create ways to move indoors. Stretch, dance, do what you can.

4. Get plenty of rest. Listen to your body, and rest as often as you need to right now. When under excessive stress, we may need more rest. Nightly sleep may not be as long, deep or restorative as needed, so take mini-breaks and rest when you need to. Then get up and do something productive. You can rest again if you need to, but accomplishing small tasks will help to boost your morale.

5. Eat well, drink plenty of water, and make conscious food choices. You need to nourish your body, mind and soul. It's easy to forget to eat or to reach for empty carbs when we're stressed. Try balancing food groups, perhaps eating small meals several times a day, rather than three large meals. Monitor your use of sugar, alcohol and caffeine. All can exacerbate stress in some cases.

6. Read what brings you comfort, and do whatever is spiritually meaningful for you. Hug those dear to you. Starting today (*and for the next 75 years at least!*), tell them every single day how much you love them.

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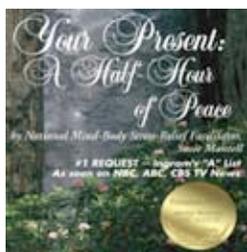


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- 7. Let your friends know you need them now, and will be needing them. Remind them that you are there for them as well.** They care and would like to help, but they may not know what you need. Call a friend today and make a date to visit, or email friends and loved ones. If it's safe to be out and about, go out for a bite with friends so you can all talk. If time is too short, schedule a 'phone date' to talk things over. Take yourself to a museum or for a walk in the park.
- 8. Schedule at least one pleasure daily for yourself -- no exceptions.** Try massage, listen to music or relaxation tapes, do something creative, paint a room, have lunch with a friend, play sports, make time to journal, nap ... and cry when you need to.
- 9. Talk with others about your feelings, and listen to simply support theirs, without judgment.** Be alone if you need to be. Then, be with others again. You may need some solitude, but it's also good to feel connected.
- 10. If you are missing someone with whom you cannot talk, write letters to them even though you may never send them.** The act of writing can be a tremendous comfort. Suggestion: Try a writing meditation in which you write to that person, and then, write a 'pretend' letter back to you from that person. Sounds strange, I know, but this is a deeply powerful exercise, and you may find great relief in it.
- 11. Ask for help. You don't have to do this alone.** Give your kids, parents and other relatives an opportunity to talk out what they're feeling, as you do the same. Teachers and school psychologists can often be a wonderful resource for age-appropriate books that help kids address different emotional issues. If you sense that you, or another, could benefit from talking with a skilled mental health professional, do not hesitate. Every community has such professionals. Your local hospital, physician or clergy member are good starting points.
- 12. Stay in-the-moment.** Try, as much as possible, to release events of the past as well as the unknowns of the future. Be Here, Now. Mindfulness is the first principle of meditation for healing relaxation.

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