



Ten Coping Strategies for older Oregonians during COVID-19

Communities + Generations + Innovations



Name that Feeling

In a crisis, we all respond differently and our responses will change over time. There is no right or wrong response to the coronavirus pandemic, no one best or "right way." How we cope over the weeks and months ahead will be as diverse as our communities. One thing we share, however: we are all going through this together.

Understand normal emotional responses to a crisis

All of these feelings are normal responses, and they may play out differently for each of us:

- **Fear:** Am I safe? Will we be okay?
- **Anger:** Why didn't they prepare us for this? Why isn't our country better prepared? People just don't understand!
- **Confusion and Frustration:** I have no idea how I'm supposed get this! What should I do right now?
- **Guilt and Self-Blame:** I'm not being the kind of person I'd like to be right now. I should have had a better plan. I should've taken better care of my health. I'm not comfortable with digital technology and I feel guilty that I am missing out.
- **Shame and Humiliation:** I see others who seem to be thriving, and I'm embarrassed to admit that I am not. I feel humiliated because I'm not sure how much longer I can financially support myself under these circumstances. I'm embarrassed to say that I'm weary.
- **Sorrow and Grief:** I miss my routine, my neighborhood, my community. It's just not the same anymore.

Weaving through all of these, the pandemic spreads **feelings of unsafety**. And the biological fact is that these feelings register in the neurons around your heart, lungs and viscera. They alter your nervous system. The problem is that it's very hard to grasp what's going on so deep inside. "All trauma is preverbal," Dr. Bessel van der Kolk writes in his book [The Body Keeps the Score](#). "The rational brain is basically impotent to talk the emotional brain out of its own reality."

So, be compassionate and accepting of your emotional self. There is nothing wrong or weak about you if you feel these ways. Have forbearance of others--your children, your partner, neighbors--who are also experiencing these feelings. With mutual support and intentionality, we will get through this. But we need to exercise patience with ourselves and others in the meantime.