

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Navigating Our Feelings in Troubled Times

March 2022 | Dr. Joel Axler



Natural disasters, disease and war are unfortunate facts of life. With 24-hour access to media, it is hard to not be affected by the news coming out of Ukraine. Since Russia began its invasion, images have poured in of bombings, military tanks on bridges, wounded citizens and displaced families fleeing for safety. Much as we would like to, we cannot control the disasters that occur. What we can govern is how we react. Here are some things to consider when it feels like the weight of the world is on your shoulders:

- **Manage your exposure:** Take regular breaks from the news and social media. If you are distressed about the content of the news, it is healthy to take a break and turn off your media.
- **Be honest with yourself about your feelings and talk about them:** Take some time to reflect and notice how these events may be affecting you. A good way to alleviate fear is to discuss it; chat with a friend over coffee, call a crisis hotline, take advantage of available help.
- **Stick to a routine:** Routine is very useful in making life more predictable and secure, especially during uncertain times. Disruptions caused by excessive worry will only increase stress levels for yourself and those around you. Consider simple behaviors like getting up at the same time every day, making your bed or going for a walk.
- **Look after your body:** Eat a healthy, balanced diet, drink plenty of water and prioritize sleep. Incorporate basic stress-reducing activities into your life, including exercise and leisure activities such as watching a movie or reading a book. Meditation and yoga also lend to a strong sense of mindfulness. Avoid the temptation to self-medicate with alcohol and other drugs.
- **Think about how you can contribute:** Look for ways to feel engaged and act part of a community because a sense of belonging is especially important right now. It promotes a sense of hope. **For some ways you can help, visit:** <https://ukrainewar.carrd.co/>
- **Make time and listen when children want to talk:** What is happening in Ukraine can be frightening for both children and adults. Ignoring or avoiding the topic can lead to children feeling lost, alone and more scared, which can affect their well-being. It is essential to have open and honest conversations with children, validate their feelings, and help them process what is happening.

Times of Stress

Even though crisis is unfolding thousands of miles away, it has led to increased stress, anxiety and fear and shaken people's sense of safety. As we emerge from two years of pandemic, it is not surprising that people are overwhelmed by the possibility of another global disaster and a lost sense of predictability about what is happening in the world.

Bottom Line: Make the most of your health, relationships, fitness, and nutrition to help manage stress and anxiety. If you are struggling, please seek assistance from your EAP, Primary Care provider or therapist.



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