

Looking after your mental health in light of Covid-19

With thanks to Rossorry Mothers' Union for creating this resource and Raymond Farrell, Mental Health Counsellor, who wrote this piece.

Coping with Change

Due to the current situation, many people are having to cope with changing lifestyles and routines- for some there is no work to go to, change in work routine, (all very serious), feelings of isolation and loneliness, unable to see loved ones, no church service to go too, football and sporting events all cancelled, the list is endless.

What can we do at such a time as this?

CHANGE can impact in four key areas; A sense of shock, anger, or other negative emotion, a coming to terms with what is happening and readjustment. For some there is escape coping-taking specific actions to avoid having to think about change. Then there is Control coping-that is being positive and proactive and not letting negativity set into one's mind. It is important to.

1. Acknowledge within self that things are changing potentially in how we must do things.
2. This is temporary.
3. Keep up regular activity where possible.
4. Eat healthy and watch the junk.
5. Exercise where possible.
6. Keep in touch with friends, family, and work colleagues through other means other than face to face.
7. Is this a time for me to do other things that I have put off or been unable to do? e.g.; get into the garden, self-care, listen to mindfulness CD, listen to a message from a local church, decorate that room, bake, read that book I got for Christmas, make that phone call to that person I said "I'll be in touch with", Check on my neighbours' needs...just some examples.

In times past, we all had ideas about changing the world- maybe it is now time to think about changing our self.

Dealing with Fear

Fear is something we all have or had to deal with many a time in our life. Current times have left many people in fear- concern about their health or that of a loved one, a job, one's finances- are just some of the things that trigger fear in us. Fear not only with impact us mentally but also can have its physical consequences. Where the mind can have catastrophic thoughts leading to feelings of insecurity it also can lead to a divided mind. This can impact our concentration, ability to focus and leads to uncertainty within us. Each fear is like an added link on a chain which ultimately can bind us and leave us trapped in insecurity and despair. Physically too, what impacts our mind can start to impact the body. Tension

headaches, muscular pain and high blood pressure can often source its origin to a and prolonged fear.

What can we do with fear? How should we challenge it? Well, firstly it is important to acknowledge it is there. Identify what is causing our fear is the starting point. Are we listening too much to negative news media or people with negative outlooks all the time? A good idea is to share our fears with someone we can trust. They can often help us look at things from new perspectives and encourage us to speak to someone who could help us deal with it. Left alone with, fear, it can gain a toe hold, progress to a foothold, and ultimately become a stronghold over our lives.

In the book of Isaiah and the chapter 41, God tells us (verse 10) to "fear not". Some reckon the words, fear not, are mentioned some 365 times in the Bible- one for every day of the year. In his word God tells us not to get dismayed, for He has promised to help us, strengthen us, and uphold us with His righteous right hand.

Are we taking our fear to the wrong place, are we carrying it every day or are we using others methods and things to try and take our fears away and which ultimately are making things no better?

Why not take our fear in prayer to God for He in His Word tells us to cast our cares upon Him, for He cares for Us?

May God encourage us at this time to take our fears to Him as we face the days that are ahead.

Confronting the subject of Worry

Worry is something we see around us in these days of coronavirus as we watch our news channels and talk with others, at this time. But what really is worry and how does it impact us in our daily life?

Worry is essentially a form of repetitive negative thinking where we can get stuck in negative thoughts about our present and how we predict the future. It's like our washing machine at home, where negative thought after negative thought keep turning around in our minds without going anywhere fast. It could be described as the loudest voice in the room where all other conversations are reduced at the behest of this bully.

According to Dr Martin Rossman in his book, *The Worry Solution*, worry is the most common form of suffering in the Western world and is at the heart in many cases of such things as overeating, alcoholism and other addictions. With the coronavirus pandemic facing our world, it is easy to get our minds trapped in a cycle of worry with constant negative news and media, and having to change in how we do things from before and not being able to socialise and meet with our friends as we used to do.

But what can we do to challenge this negative cycle we currently face often in our isolation? Well, it is important to state that negative thinking at such a time is normal. Worry shows we care and without it we, could potential place ourselves in great danger. However, where it can become a problem is when we give it more, time, energy and attention in our minds that

it snowballs into crippling thinking that prevents us doing and enjoying other things that are healthy and good.

Helpful strategies to deal with worry can include talking to someone we trust over the phone to vent our feelings and maybe distract us to other ways of thinking, distract ourselves with more purposeful and enjoyable activities and when we sense negative thought patterns coming to the fore, we too like the workman at the side of the road must put up the STOP sign that prevents us going down a road that is not in our best interests to do so.

Psalm 46 begins with the words, "*God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble*". For the Christian this is a great comfort to know that God is our hope in times of anxiety and worry. God is all powerful, our great Protector and a God of provision in such a time as this. So why not Be Still-and know that we can go to the God of heaven to strengthen us day by day and know we can cast our cares upon Him, for He cares for us in every minute detail of our lives.