

In her article appearing on the American Association of Christian Counselors website Georgia Shaffer wrote about being *Ambushed by Anxiety*

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7

With all the craziness going on in the world right now, it’s understandable that our stress and anxiety levels are at an all-time high. Whether you’re still working everyday or your schedule has suddenly come to a screeching halt, I want us to take just a minute and talk through some ways we can handle our anxiety in the midst of uncertain times.

While we can’t avoid anxiety all together, we CAN take steps to proactively deal with everything we’re facing — whether it’s the coronavirus pandemic or some other stressor in your life.

In order to avoid getting ambushed by anxiety, here are a few tips you can start practicing today:

1. Learn to Unclutter Your Mind

A cluttered mind is an anxious mind. An uncluttered mind has room to hear God’s voice and experience His presence. Like Martha, in Luke’s Gospel, our minds can be filled with all kinds of concern, demands and deadlines. Like Mary, we need to make the choice to clear out the distractions and make space for our Lord and His wisdom, peace, and love.

2. Seek Peace through Prayer

In Philippians 4:6-7 NLT, Paul says, “Don’t worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God’s peace which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”

Make a list telling God exactly what you need. Then make another list of things God has done for which you are grateful. Give God both lists, resting and trusting in Him to be with you and guide you throughout the day.

3. Stay Connected

Being connected to people who will encourage you is critical in managing toxic worry. Whether you talk to a co-worker over the phone, FaceTime with a loved one, or engage with a group of caring friends, you will feel better verbalizing your frustrations and concerns rather than stewing over them alone.

4. Let Go of Your Agenda

A desire to control your life and make things happen according to your timetable leads to more tension, stress, and exhaustion. Instead of holding tightly to your agenda, choose to surrender it all to God.

5. Rest, Eat Well and Exercise

If every little thing overwhelms you, then it’s always time for some rest and good nutrition. It’s amazing how much smaller your problems appear after a satisfying meal and a good night’s sleep. (See Elijah’s example in 1 Kings 19:1-9.) Any activity requiring physical exertion — lifting weights, jogging, cleaning the house, and digging in the dirt — can release endorphins and reduce anxiety.

Even if we’re all stuck at home and social distancing because of a world-wide virus, we can still practice each of these tips. Some of them, we can probably practice more easily now that we’re forced to slow down a bit!

Which of these tips seems most important for you to implement today? How will you make it happen?