

# Anxiety Coping Mechanisms

This time of year is ALWAYS difficult for me, regardless of a global pandemic or not. I struggle because as a farm wife, I have to get back into "single mom mode." My husband is busy with farm stuff; planting season is about to begin and even though it's hard doing supper time, bath time, and bed time alone, I know my husband has to put in long hours to help feed the world. Plus, he loves this time of year and honestly thrives during planting season.

There are a lot of unknowns floating around the world these days. When will this virus stop? Will there be a vaccine, cure or therapeutic soon? Are people actually adhering to the recommended social distancing practices? As human beings, it's common to fear the unknown. I will be the first to admit that I have had immense anxiety about this whole situation. But, in moments when I genuinely think I'm going to lose my mind, I focus on some coping mechanisms that I have used the past 5-7 years.

Here are 5 coping mechanisms that I use almost every day to help me deal with new or existing anxiety that, at times, can be legitimately crippling.

1. Name 10 objects in your space by adjective. It sounds SO simple, but it's truly a method that helps remove your mind from its current place and bring you back to REALITY. For example, sometimes when I have rising anxiety or feel like I'm going to have a panic attack, I will remove myself from that place and name 10 objects in my space. "The door is white. The walls are gray. The flowers are coral. That table is black. The pillow is red..." so on and so forth. You say (out loud) different objects in your home and name them by a description. It's a practice I've used for a really long time and by the time you name all 10 objects, you have removed yourself from that anxious state without even realizing it. I have done this for years, and honestly, some days I've done this 10-15 times throughout the day. *Some* days, it's just about surviving.
2. Inhale and exhale, while counting up to 10, then back down. Take in a slow, deep breathe while counting to 10; once you get to 10, count down to 0 while you exhale. When you focus on the counting and slow down your breath, your fight or flight system slows and therefore your entire being calms. You're focusing on the counting and breathing, as opposed to the rising anxiety.
3. Get off social media, turn off the TV. Studies have shown that social media increases anxiety. Sometimes the absolute BEST thing you can do is put your phone on the charger, shut off the TV and remove the stimuli. Then, either pick up a book, fold a load of clothes, or...Number 4.
4. Get some fresh air. Common sense, but ESPECIALLY in the world right now, fresh air and Vitamin D are ESSENTIAL. You have to get outside, breathe in the air and soak in some sun, even if it's just a walk around the block or down the road. Don't take your phone with you (unless you absolutely have to) and just let nature sink into you.
5. Pray or meditate. Again, seems like a common sense practice, but let me elaborate. Whether you choose to pray or meditate, remove any distractions, and dive into a CONVERSATION. Growing up I always thought that prayer was supposed to be these regimented, exact prayers that were recited, and then I just went to bed. But as I've grown, I've realized prayer is so much more than that. It's my relationship with God. I know that in the end, regardless of what happens in this world, good WILL triumph over evil. That being said, I use my prayer as a time to talk with God. Tell Him my positives and my negatives. Ask Him questions. Share my joys and my sorrows. Tell Him my needs. Honestly since I've opened my prayer life to more than just the prayers I've memorized over the years, I feel like I am so much closer to Him. *\*Disclaimer: there is NOTHING wrong with memorized, recited prayers, I still do plenty of those as well.*

Some of these practices might seem like common sense, where as others you may not have used before. These are all incredibly practical methods that, and, if utilized enough, can become HABIT. They've definitely helped me remove myself from the anxiety I'm feeling before I get into a negative, downward spiral. Remember if you're feeling anxious, it's a FEELING. You may feel anxious, but you are NOT the anxiety.