

# Coping with Anxiety and Uncertainty

With Diana Zelvin, LCSW

# Today's Talk

## Strategies to Feel:

- ❑ CALMER
- ❑ EMPOWERED
- ❑ OPTIMISTIC
- ❑ HOPEFUL
- ❑ RESILIENT

Emotional wellbeing is necessary for focus and clear decision making.

# We are all feeling this together!

It would be unrealistic to have stable emotions now.

Your feelings may change moment by moment, day by day, week by week.

Everyone has their own process and timing of how they can move forward.

- ❑ Be compassionate to yourself.
- ❑ Try not to compare yourself to others.
- ❑ Be realistic on how fast you can make change to feel better.



# How I Became an Anxiety Expert

I went through some of the same things you are going through now:

Losing my business

Experiencing crippling health issues

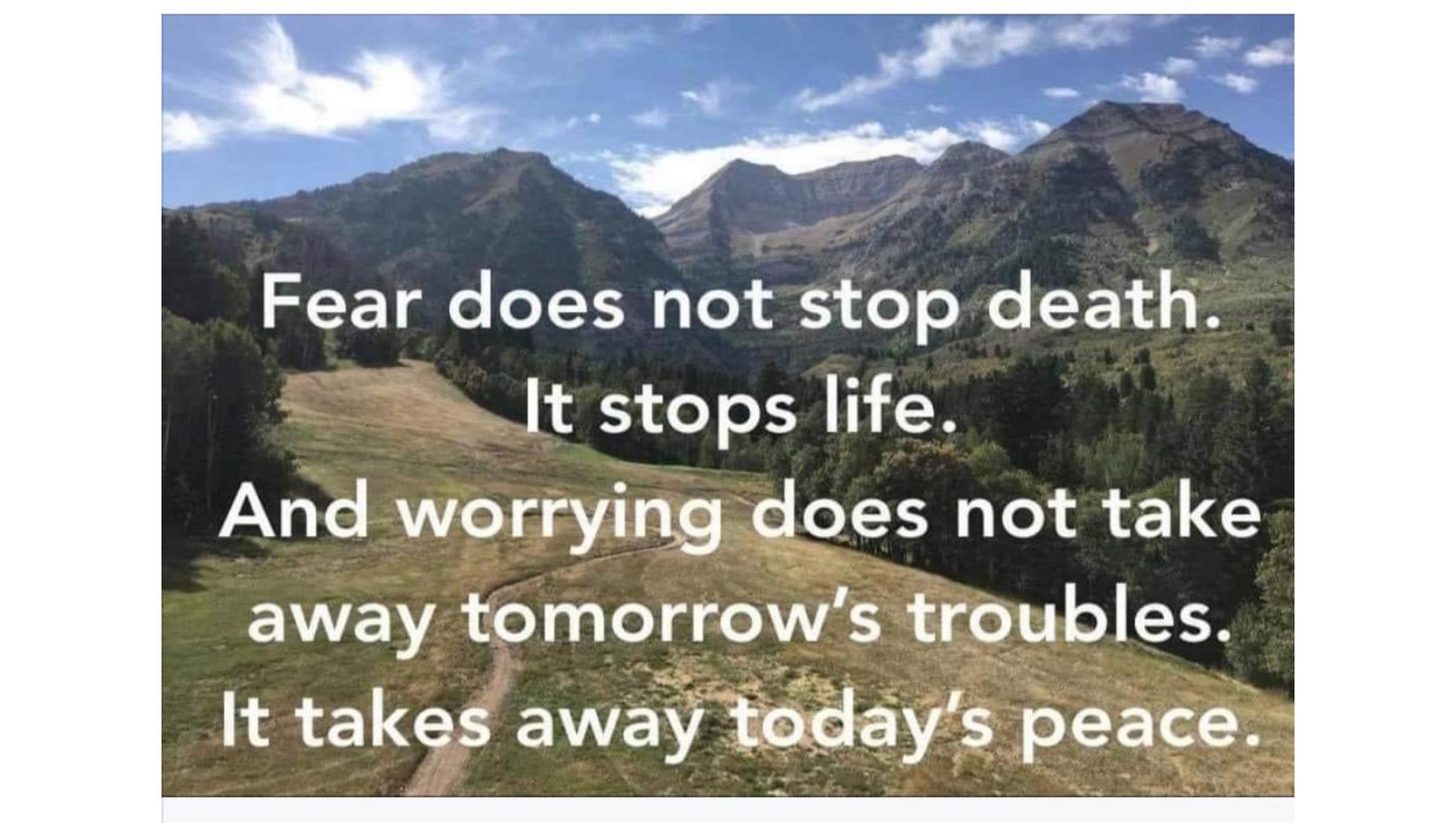
I discovered ways to move forward and feel better.

Worry and Fear are at the root of stress and anxiety.

Our fears contain a lot of “what ifs” about the future, but worrying about the future won’t change it.

Underneath all of our fears, is the main fear that “I can’t handle it”.

Remind yourself you have handled obstacles and hard times, and you CAN handle whatever happens.

A scenic landscape featuring a dirt road that winds through a valley. The road starts in the foreground and leads towards a range of mountains in the distance. The mountains are covered in green vegetation and have some rocky peaks. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

**Fear does not stop death.  
It stops life.  
And worrying does not take  
away tomorrow's troubles.  
It takes away today's peace.**

# Resilience

If you are an entrepreneur or are in business, you have already overcome big obstacles and stressful events.

How did you did get through it? What was helpful?

Remind yourself that you have already been resilient.

# Building Your Resiliency.

When things feel out of your control,  
There are two things you can control.

1. What you choose focus your thoughts on
2. What actions you choose take in the moment

# The Present Moment

The present moment is all we have and all we can control.

There are methods to bring your mind back into the present moment so you are not worrying about the future and the things you can't control.

It takes intention, practice and repetition.

Like building any muscles, the more you do it the better you get at it.

Every moment is an opportunity for choice.

You can choose what to focus on and let into your mind:

Do you choose to focus on what is going wrong and feed your fears

*or*

Do you choose to focus on the positive you see and cultivating optimism.

You can choose what actions you want to take.

You make choices and decisions every moment of every day.

You can choose how you are going to use your time, what  
next step you are going to take

# I CANNOT CONTROL

(So, I can LET GO of these things.)

IF OTHERS  
FOLLOW THE  
RULES OF SOCIAL  
DISTANCING

THE AMOUNT  
OF TOILET  
PAPER AT THE  
STORE

## I CAN CONTROL

(So, I will focus on these things.)

THE  
ACTIONS  
OF  
OTHERS

MY POSITIVE  
ATTITUDE

TURNING  
OFF THE  
NEWS

FINDING FUN  
THINGS TO DO  
AT HOME

HOW  
LONG  
THIS  
WILL  
LAST

HOW I FOLLOW CDC  
RECOMMENDATIONS

LIMITING MY  
SOCIAL MEDIA

PREDICTING  
WHAT WILL  
HAPPEN

MY OWN SOCIAL  
DISTANCING

MY KINDNESS &  
GRACE

HOW  
OTHERS  
REACT

OTHER  
PEOPLE'S  
MOTIVES



# Optimism in Extreme Times

In “Man’s Search for Meaning” Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist, recounts how he kept himself alive in Auschwitz, by cultivating an optimistic mind.

He took small actions that gave him a sense of hope. This helped him feel empowered, that no matter what was going to happen he could effect change on his own thoughts and actions.

*Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.*

*Viktor Frankl*

# When you are in a pessimistic mindset

Your thoughts focus on what is going wrong and your fears of the future.

You feel more negative, helpless, stressed, and stuck.

This state of mind keeps you from recognizing solutions.

# Optimism is a Mindset you can Cultivate

- ★ As you strengthen your optimistic muscle you start to focus on the positive things you see and good things that are going on in the world.
- ★ You focus on gratitude and see abundance.
- ★ You feel more energized and able to take small actions, helping you feel empowered.
- ★ You start to see new options, opportunities and solutions to challenges you are facing.

*“Attitude is a little thing that makes a  
big difference”*

*Winston Churchill*

# Tools to Become Calm, Empowered and Optimistic

1. Manage your Intake of Negativity
2. Deep Breathing
3. Meditation
4. Move Your Body
5. Make a Daily Plan
6. Talk to Someone
7. Sleep Plan

# 1. Manage Intake of News and

## Negativity

- ❑ Minimize your news intake.
- ❑ If it helps you feel informed, limit your time to very small amounts.
- ❑ It brings trauma into your mind and your home.
- ❑ It triggers anxious feelings and make you feel helpless.
- ❑ Edit social media to help you stay positive and resilient.

## 2. Deep Breathing

- ❑ Anyone can do it. It's easy to do and everyone has time for it.
- ❑ Any deep breathing technique you do is a powerful, simple way to clear the mind, relax the body and improve focus.
- ❑ It slows down the stress response and calms your anxiety in the moment.
- ❑ It brings you into the present moment and out of worrying about the future.

Recommendations: Apps - Breathe, Breathing App, Headspace, Google - box breathing



Breathe in sync with this:

### 3. Meditate

It is a simple action that anyone can do, but the effects are profound;

- ❑ Helps reduce stress and anxiety
- ❑ Restores calm and peace
- ❑ Clears your mind making way for creativity and innovation
- ❑ Helps you make better decisions and be more productive, which is why some of the most successful people have a mediation practice.

Recommendations: Apps - Calm, Work Mindful - Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach, Oprah and Deepak 21 Days Meditation Experience - Hope in Uncertain times, 7 Days to Relieve Stress and Anxiety - includes simple strategies for instant anxiety relief.

## 4. Move your body

Make it easy, fun and realistic!

- ★ It's a natural anti-anxiety and antidepressant
- ★ Releases of endorphins making you feel good
- ★ Relieves tension and stress
- ★ Boosts energy
- ★ Boosts immunity
- ★ Brings oxygen directly to the brain helping you think clearly
- ★ Helps to sleep better
- ★ Brings you into the moment
- ★ It's empowering

Recommendations - Free online yoga, dance and all types of exercise.

# 5. Talk to Someone

You don't need to go it alone, we all need support.

1. Make a list of people to reach out to who make you feel good. Schedule 1-2 calls/ zoom a week, see how it makes you feel.
2. Talk to a professional - make sure the therapist is the right fit for you. Talking with a supportive nonjudgmental therapist should give you some immediate relief. They can help you work through the difficult feelings as well as help gain insight about yourself, that may be exacerbating the fears. While friends and family can be helpful, they are not trained to give you the help you need, especially when you need extra support. A good therapist knows how to listen to get to the root of your issues, overcome emotional challenges, and make positive changes in your life.

Recommendations - Many therapists like myself, have a sliding scale now or you can get insurance reimbursement

NY State Mental Health Emotional Support line - 1-844-863-9314

## 6. Make a Daily Plan

A schedule gives your day structure and helps you feel less overwhelmed.

How you begin your day can set the tone for the rest of the day.

Don't check your phone, emails, or the news until after you have made your plan so that you have a calmer, clearer mind.

- ❑ Your schedule should have blocks of time and should include;
  - ❑ Breathing/Meditation
  - ❑ Meals
  - ❑ Work
  - ❑ Moving (even just 2 times a week will help)
  - ❑ Time with family or friends (zoom or in person)
  - ❑ If you have children, you will need a rough schedule for their day, to try to make it work with yours.

## 7. Night Time Plan to get Restorative Sleep

- No news before bed
- No phone in the bedroom
- Watch a humorous show
- Read a relaxing book
- Do breathing exercises
- Take an epsom salt bath
- Journal

# Gratitude and Appreciation

Keep a journal next to your bed to write for a few minutes things you feel grateful for and things you feel proud of that you did today.

This helps your brain look at what you DO have instead of what you don't.

As you sleep, it shifts your subconscious from worries to a more positive place.

# Make a list of your Attributes and Values

If your business can no longer function the way it did, what are the qualities you possess that made you good at what you do, that helped you build your business and your profession? Write it down and look at it when you need to.

It's not the business or profession that defines you, it is those qualities and your values that define you. These are the qualities that will take you through whatever rebuilding you need to do.

You have more inside you than you even know.

Life isn't about waiting for the  
storm to pass,  
it's learning to dance in the rain.

# Summary

- ★ We cannot avoid the struggle but we can choose how to cope with it, find meaning in it, and move forward with renewed purpose.
- ★ Optimism is a muscle you can strengthen and resilience can be cultivated. You can discover that no matter what you are facing you can effect positive change towards the outcome based on your thoughts and actions.
- ★ You have control of what you choose to focus your thoughts on and what actions you decide to take.
- ★ Be realistic about what you can do. Even adding in one small change to your daily life like no news, or a few minutes of breathing can make a big difference in feeling calmer.
- ★ If you make small changes everyday you are building new habits you will always have when life brings unexpected challenges.

# Book Recommendations

**When Things Fall Apart - Heart Advice for Difficult Times - Pema Chodron**

**Care of The Soul - Thomas Moore**

**Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway- Susan Jeffers Ph.D.**

**Hope and Help for Your Nerves - Dr. Clair Weeks**

**Man's Search for Meaning - Viktor Frankl**

**Me Talk Pretty One Day - or any books by David Sedaris - Laugh out loud funny, because we could all use a good laugh.**

Diana Zelvin LCSW

[diana@dianazelvin.com](mailto:diana@dianazelvin.com)

dianazelvin.com