

Dear Podarites,

As the events surrounding the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak unfold, it's understandable that you might begin to feel increasing stress. With the rapid advance of the outbreak and the ever changing face of information you are definitely not odd or alone to feel some of the feelings like fear, worry, sometimes anger, boredom or even helplessness. These are indeed trying times. Trying to deny it and roaming around the streets adventurously (or carelessly) does not make sense at all! ... However, panicking and being overtly anxious is also not going to be of any use. **In both approaches we will only suffer and make others around us suffer.**

As the saying goes... **Prevention is better than cure.** But so also as Buddha says that **Suffering** though expected yet is also a **Choice**. Whether I choose to give into my feelings of panic and alarm and keep watching news channels with fear??? Or can I make a better choice by doing everything that is paramount, necessary and precautionous towards staying safe but without the incessant worrying. What can I do in these challenging times as a Choice is definitely that I need to shop not from outside but from my own self-within?

Some definite measures which we all can take as listed below:

- **Self-Hygiene is paramount:** Maintaining correct hygiene and encouraging others around us to do the same makes you not only a responsible citizen; but very organically speaking it's your MOST IMMEDIATE KEY TO SURVIVAL.
- **Follow the Rules like a Lifeline:** As per the World Health Organization's (WHO) sincere and earnest request and prediction; the further course of the Coronavirus spread largely now depends on Indian Land. The way we will be able to manage and handle it will determine the extent to which it will spread or be curtailed effectively. So our dear, dear students you all are young and in fact the torchbearers who can use technology smartly and urge more number of people to practice and follow all the Precautions given by the government. Following all the government health regulations is paramount in a large country like ours!
- **You Become the Social Role Model:** How about being the pioneers of starting a pledge of following the Self-Regulation & Personal-Social Responsibility by firsthand practicing Social Distancing, Mandatory Hygiene yourself? How about you posting your pictures everyday with a big broad smile on your Instagram accounts & Social Media handles? How about starting a chain and taking up the 21 days challenge within your friend circles? That's one of the quickest ways to relieve pent up stress, increase the happy hormones of achievement & discipline in your brain (neuropathways) and surely creating a positive social connection. Thus, 'Staying Relevant' is what will make your psychological immunity stronger to handle the Social Distancing better! Just imagine what an Inspiration you will serve for people who are truly struggling either physically or emotionally in these challenging times? Spread more of smiles of achievement, more than the scare.
- **Keeping a realistic perspective will really help:** Rather than getting all anxious about getting infected and letting your thoughts make you miserable and lose perspective, rather make a conscious decision and choose to tell yourself **loudly minimum 3 times a day** that, "Although I would prefer to be sure of not getting infected I cannot be completely certain on that and that I have to accept that it could happen to anyone, which includes me too. However, hovering all thoughts around the

virus and the disease only makes me more depressed and hence more vulnerable. So even though I am acknowledging this issue ... yet I also choose to tell myself loud and clear that I am using positive thoughts, positive actions, positive self-talk to reinforce that I have a strong immunity and that I choose to work towards making my body and mind a storehouse of good health!"

- **Stay Informed not Alarmed:** Keeping yourself well informed and updated with the current status is essential. How much ever we feel worried or scared of reading the news; but necessary it is. However, it can be urged that one must keep restricted and concise timings when you will catch up with news. This helps in filtering the amount of negative information you allow yourself to soak in and at a fixed time bar. See you definitely have that under your control! ☺
- **Practice a fixed routine/ timetable:** Doing this tells your brain that most things are in your control and within normalcy. It brings great predictability to the mind and soothes anxiety due to the uncertainty around. Sticking to the daily routine is always a good way to combat unnecessary preoccupation with any particular situation or event. Work always helps in keeping the mind occupied fruitfully, be it your vocation, house work, dusting an old hobby etc. Make your bucket lists, your career/ relationship/ financial plans and maybe redraw where you will like yourself to be 10 or 15 years later as an individual or a family. Isn't this Covid 19 a learning for us to introspect???
- **Follow a problem resolution approach:** Although we may experience intense feelings of fear and stress ... yet rather than catastrophizing, why not choose to be in the problem resolution mode? Try to focus on what useful things you can do for yourself and your family to stay healthy and fit. That helps greatly. Eat light, teach your parent or friend online your favorite exercise regime that you devised (a family joint session of exercise/ dance is surely to leave you in splits!!!), have enough rest, and keep your brain occupied by learning, reading and writing.
- **Use the time and Social Distancing theme wisely & reflect:** This is the first time we are experiencing a total world-wide lockdown; and self quarantine was an unheard concept in this age of over socializing. In retrospect isn't the Social Distancing also giving us a great time to reflect upon ourselves away from our time-bound schedules and people? It in fact is a great opportunity to truly start identifying how you are in your own company and start creating magic with yourself within. Even if spending time by yourself can be a little overwhelming sometimes, may be a lot initially ... yet practice this self-time ... it may reveal some really wonderful gifts that we all carry and it may even give you time to develop some aspects of your personality that need some clean up too may be! May be it's your own private time to discover, cherish and enjoy a hobby, learn pottery or reread your favorite childhood comic book.
- **Exercise regularly:** While gyms are closed and social distancing guidelines are in place, it's still possible to get in aerobic exercise, like walking alone on the terrace, dancing to your favorite tracks. Any form of exercise can help release endorphins (natural substances that help you feel better and maintain a positive attitude). As per the WHO guidelines **Yoga** and **Stretching** is one way to both exercise your body and calm your mind and it's easy to do by yourself.
- **Urge and encourage your families as well to follow a fixed schedule:** Apart from that we are spending quality and quantity time with each other by engaging in bonding and learning activities, can we not try as family members (in a hustle-bustle city like Mumbai) to wind down, clear out our

misunderstanding may be or just make sure that nobody really goes overboard with constant preoccupation with the Coronavirus topic in hand.

- **Spring Clean your homes & minds:** In order to keep the boredom and corona info fatigue out of our lives we can also try out Spring Cleaning as a ritual every 3 days as a Family Activity together.
- **Catching up with friends on video calls and not just forwarded whatsapp messages:** A meaningful conversation today can have a super impact on a long lost friend or family member in these stuffy times. Talk to friends, do video calls, zoom sessions, play games with family on whatsapp calls. That is definitely not restricted!
- **Sing, Sing and Sing – music is the best healer after Time!**
- **Paint beautiful, funny, dramatic, intense, silly or weird pictures on a canvas:** Art has a greatly calming effect on the mind and the body. Make a collage of your dream destinations & activities. Go ahead and may be create a Vision-Board ... You never know what magic you may create with the strokes!
- **Lastly, take a break from over-thinking and sometimes over-doing:** Get enough rest, sleep, pray hard, meditate or practice a new skill. But spend some peaceful time indoors and see how you can bring a bright ray of hope everyday for yourself and others around.

Following these steps to manage stress and add a sense of normalcy for yourself and others around. “Take care of yourself and others around you. “ “Stay Home & Stay Happily Safe.”

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SELF-DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

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