

# FREE YOURSELF FROM FEAR: COPING WITH CORONAVIRUS

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*This book is dedicated to all mankind  
as we face Coronavirus (COVID-19) together  
with fortitude*

PREVIOUS BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR:

[Life Unexpected: A Trauma Psychologist Journeys through Breast Cancer](#)

[Operational Stress Management](#) (with Yotam Dagan)

[My Resilience Workbook](#)

## WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

My first book on "Freedom from Fear" was written in the aftermath of my experiences in overcoming breast cancer. Now, as the world faces Coronavirus, or COVID-19, it is time to brush the dust off of what we know about dealing with fears, and prime ourselves for the weeks and months to come, as the world comes to terms with Coronavirus. The operative word here is uncertainty. Nobody really knows what lies ahead. While this is a truism, and nobody ever knows what is around the corner, our world feels very shaky these days, and many of us are feeling anxious and afraid. We need to do what we can to remind ourselves how to deal with these anxieties and fears in order to protect our own physical and mental health, and to help those around us. We all impact and are impacted by the people in our immediate environment. In particular, parents of young children have an important role to play in their children's well being. Taking an active role in dealing with our fears is one small step we can take in overcoming this virus.

To that end, I have written this little book. I hope to explore with you what I have learned about fear and anxiety. While I cannot promise that your life will be worry free, in fact, I can almost guarantee you that it will not be so, nevertheless, I hope that you will learn to befriend your fears, and learn to live with them in greater peace. This book will start you on that journey.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Before getting started, I recommend that you get a notebook that will accompany you as you read this book and do the exercises. Any size notebook will work. I personally favor notebooks with nice covers, but that is up to you. This notebook will be your Journal. Keep it near you, as you read this book, so that you can do the exercises that require writing and track your progress.

## HOW THIS BOOK WORKS

The book is written as a seven-day journey. That means that each day covers a different topic. You can work through the book in one week, choosing one exercise from each chapter. However, many of you may prefer to take it more slowly. In order to do that, you may turn each day into a full week, and spend some time over the week doing the exercises, trying out some new behaviors, and reflecting on what worked for you and what did not. There is often more than one exercise suggested. Feel free to experiment. Be forewarned. Not every suggestion here will work for every person. Each one of you is different. Find what works for you.



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# Day 1. Learning to Breathe

Before diving in to our fears, I want to provide you with a life preserver. This life preserver will give you the confidence to jump into the deep waters facing your fears, and help you float back up to the surface if you feel that you are getting out of your depth and sinking. It is actually quite a simple skill and something that we do every day.

What is it? Breathing.

Why do we have to learn how to breathe? Don't we already know how to do that? We breathe all day and all night long without paying much attention to it. Thankfully. Imagine what it would be like if we had to think each time before we took a breath. So, why do we need to learn to breathe. To answer that question we will do a short exercise.

## EXERCISE: LEARNING TO BREATHE

*Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach.*

*Now breathe.*

*What did you notice? Where was your breath coming from?*

*You probably answered, "My chest."*

*Now, if you can, find a baby, and have a look at how that baby is breathing. What is the difference between the way you breathe and the way the baby breathes?*

If you cannot find a baby, I will share with you what we know. Babies, when they are first born, breathe into their abdomen. Notice the next time you are around a baby that when the baby breathes its stomach goes up and down. As we get older, we lose that skill and begin to breathe from our chest. This shallow breathing means that we do not fully fill up our lungs. As a result, we take more breaths that are less effective at re-oxygenating our blood. When we experience stress and anxiety, our breath becomes even more rapid and shallow, and thus, even less effective.

A hallmark of deep relaxation is taking deep breaths, bringing the breath all the way down into our stomach or abdomen. Deep, mindful breathing can quickly restore a sense of calm and relaxation. It is an instant de-stressor.

Let's try another exercise.

## EXERCISE: MINUTE OF MINDFULNESS

*Place your right hand on your chest and your left hand on your abdomen. Close your mouth and try to breathe in through your nose. If you have trouble breathing through your nose, open your mouth slightly. Bring the breath as far down as you can. Hold it for a moment or two. Breathe out slowly through your mouth.*

*Let's try that again. Breathe in through your nose, and out through your mouth.*

*Many people find it helpful to count while they breathe. Each one of you will find your own pace, but initially, try breathing in through your nose to the count of four, holding your breath for a moment or two, and then breathing out slowly through your mouth to the count of six.*

*Repeat.*

*Notice as you are breathing how you are able to bring the breath into your belly. Place your hands on your belly and watch them rise.*

*Now do it two more times.*

The goal of this exercise is to re teach your body how to breathe deeply, and intentionally. This will cause a relaxation response in your body and often works much better than saying to yourself, "relax," or "slow down."

## HOMEWORK

1. Practice breathing daily.
2. Choose two times during the day that you will set aside one minute (60 seconds) to breathe.
3. If possible, close your eyes, and take four complete breaths, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.
4. If you prefer counting, you may count as you breathe. Alternatively, you may choose two words to say to yourself, the first word for when you breathe in, and the second word for when you breathe. For example, you can say "in" and "out", or you can choose any other set of words that you like. "Soft" and "belly" are two other favorite words to use as you breathe in and out. When you breathe in and say soft, imagine your body softening, and as you breathe out and say "belly", imagine your belly relaxing.
5. When you finish taking four complete breaths, notice how your body feels. Notice how you are feeling.

6. Record your progress in your Journal. It is helpful to set up a chart for the entire week that looks something like this.

Day	Time of Day I	Time of Day II	Number of Breaths	Comments
Sunday				
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				



## DAY 2. BUILDING YOUR RESOURCES

Before we get down to the business of looking at our fears, it is important to prepare ourselves for this task. Looking at our fears head on can be an unsettling event, and while people react differently, and for some it is easier than others, you would not be reading this book if your fears were not bothering you.

The first step in preparing to look at our fears is the breathing that we practiced in Day 1. Throughout this week, it is important to continue the practice of deep abdominal breathing at least twice a day.

The second step in preparing to take a look at our fears is to strengthen our coping resources. What does that mean? What we want to do in this chapter is take a closer look at the people, activities and things that make us feel good. We will call these "resources". After looking at what resources we currently have in our lives, and how often and well we are using them, we will consider what to add to our existing resources and figure out how to do that.

### EXERCISE: WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE FEELING BLUE?

What you will need: Your Journal

*1. Before beginning this exercise, spend a minute doing "Minute Mindfulness." This exercise is essentially, what you learned in the last chapter.*

#### **Minute Mindfulness**

- 1. Sit comfortably in your chair, feet on the ground, and one hand on your belly, the other on your chest.**
- 2. Breathe in through your nose to the count of four.**
- 3. Hold your breath to the count of two**
- 4. Breathe out through your mouth, SLOWLY, to the count of five or six.**
- 5. Repeat three more times.**
- 6. Notice how your body feels in the chair from the top of your head down to your toes.**
- 7. Notice any sounds.**
- 8. Notice how you are feeling inside.**

2. Take out your notebook and write at the top of the page (in blue pen if you like) **"What do I like to do when I am feeling blue? What helps me to feel better?"**

3. Make a list of all those things that make you feel better. The more items you have on the list, the better.

4. Review your list and sort the items into categories. The categories I suggest are:

- *Social - activities that involve interacting with people or animals*
- *Physical - physical activities*
- *Cognitive - activities using your mental faculties (for example - problem solving or list making)*
- *Creative - activities that involve the arts or any creative work, for example - making music, art, pottery, writing*
- *Everything else - this is the category for things that are hard to categorize!*

5. Review your list and notice which categories are empty and which ones are full.

6. Are there items that you would like to add to your list? Perhaps there are activities that you have done in the past that you found helpful or enjoyable? Maybe you have read or thought about a new activity? This is your opportunity to add them using a different color pen.

7. Think about a time, in the next few days, when you will be able to try out one of these new resources. Write it down, and commit.

Now that you have compiled a list of resources, keep this list handy and remember to use it often. When you are feeling sad, unhappy, anxious or blue have a look at your list and see just what it is that may make you feel even just a little bit better. Is it a warm bath, a bar of chocolate, a run in the park, or a chat on the phone with a good friend? For some a book or a movie provide a wonderful respite and work as a "feel good." For others, prayer is just the thing, or listening to music. There is not one magic pill that will work for everybody. Moreover, on some days one resource may work for you, and on other days you may need to try something else. The more resources you have identified, the more you will be able to find ways to soothe yourself and make yourself feel better.

As we begin to look more closely at our fears, you may find yourself feeling upset, scared or nervous. This is a good time to take out your resource list and choose to do one of the activities on it.

## DAY 3. UNCOVERING YOUR FEARS

In this chapter, we will get down to business. Just what are you afraid of? Are you afraid to talk about your fears, write them down, imagine them, or even think about them? You are not alone. The biggest fear that most of us carry around deep in our hearts is the fear of fear itself.

Being afraid of our fears can be paralyzing. In fact, at this point, you may be ready to close this book, never to open it again. All I can say to you is, try to stay with me. I believe that if you hang in there until the end of this book, you will find significant relief from the fears that have been haunting you. I do not promise that these fears will disappear, however, I do firmly believe that they will change, diminish, and stop dominating your life and your actions.

Before we get started, let us practice a Minute of Mindfulness. This will help to restore a sense of calm.

Remember how to do this?

### **Minute of Mindfulness**

- 1. Sit comfortably in your chair, feet on the ground, one hand on your belly, the other on your chest.**
- 2. Breathe in through your nose to the count of four.**
- 3. Hold your breath to the count of two**
- 4. Breathe out through your mouth, SLOWLY, to the count of 5 or 6.**
- 5. Repeat three more times.**
- 6. Notice how your body feels in the chair from the top of your head down to your toes.**
- 7. Notice any sounds.**
- 8. Notice how you are feeling inside.**

Now we are ready for our first exercise.

### **EXERCISE: FAMILIAR FEARS**

Materials you will need: Your Journal

1. *Open your Journal and write at the top of the page (in red if you wish):*

*"My Fears"*

2. *Number the lines from one to ten.*

3. *Write one fear on each line.*

*These may be old fears or new fears. The fears may be related to the Coronavirus, to other medical issues, to how you maybe affected by Coronavirus including finances, family, work, the economy, world peace, nuclear threat or anything else that comes into your mind. If you find that you need more than ten lines, go ahead, and write down as many fears as you have.*

4. *When you have completed your list, take a deep breath, pat yourself on the back, and get something to drink (preferably non-alcoholic). Great job!*

5. *Now that you have patted yourself on the back, and taken a little break, begin to review your list. Assign a number to each fear from one to ten, with one being a teeny tiny fear that you barely notice, and ten being a humongous fear that paralyzes you and keeps you up at night. You can think about the scale of one to ten along these lines:*

*1 - tiny fear*

*2- very small fear*

*3- small fear*

*4-getting a little bigger*

*5-medium sized fear*

*6-a little bigger*

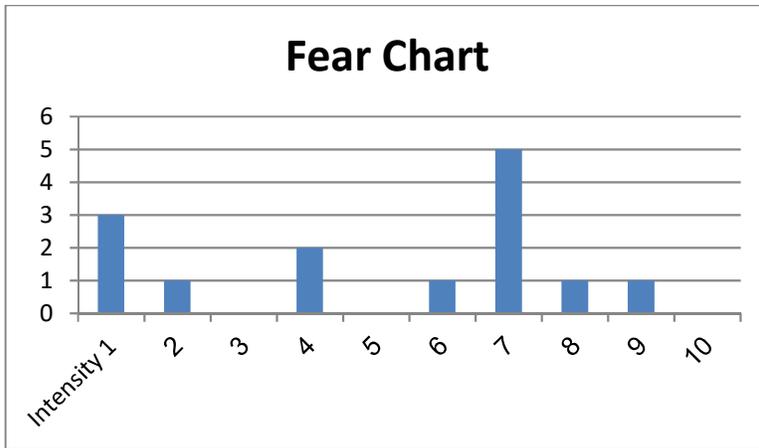
*7-a significant fear*

*8-a very worrisome fear*

*9-a huge fear*

*10-a humongous fear*

6. *Now we will chart our fears. The horizontal axis (X axis) will chart the intensity, and the vertical axis (Y axis) will be a simple count of how many fears you have that are in that category. Have a look at the chart below, and try to draw a similar one in your Journal. Count how many fears are a "1", and enter that into the chart. Now count how many are a "2", and so on. The chart will look something like this:*



7. When you are finished plotting, step back for a moment and take a breath. Pat yourself on the back, again, and tell yourself that you are doing a great job.

8. Look at the chart. Ask yourself the following questions:

*What do you notice?*

*What is the intensity level of most of your fears?*

*Does this surprise you?*

*Is this what you expected?*

Before you close your Journal for today, consider how brave you have been. You have done some very hard work. Go back and have a look at your resources list from Chapter 2. Choose something from that list that makes you feel good. Perhaps make yourself a cup of tea, go for a walk, or watch a movie. Do something nice for yourself. You deserve it.



## DAY 4: THINKING ABOUT FEARS

Fears at a time like this, with the outbreak of the Coronavirus worldwide is both normal and expected. Many of us have gone through some scary and difficult times in the past, but the Coronavirus is something new, something we have never experienced before. As a matter of fact, it is something the world has never experienced before. The uncertainty about our personal future, and how all of this will affect our day to day lives is unknown. We may feel very anxious and panicky. That would not be unusual. This affects our mood, our feelings and our behavior. Merely thinking that I may get Coronavirus, or that someone dear to me may get it increases my anxiety.

Thoughts directly affect our emotions and our behavior. If thoughts are so powerful, why not put them to work for us?

That is exactly what Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) does in the therapy room and beyond. Therapists who have trained in CBT help their clients examine their thoughts, their feelings and their behaviors. Once the troublesome thoughts are identified, the next step is to try to modify them. That is what we will experiment with now.

In Chapter 3, we identified fears that each one of us has. Go back to your list and choose one or two of your fears as the subject for the next exercise.

I have chosen four different ways that you can try to modify your thoughts. Since each person is unique, and not all methods will work for everyone, I suggest that you read through the four exercises and choose the one that appeals to you the most. Follow the instructions for that activity. See how you feel when you have completed it. If it has helped you, that is wonderful. If the exercise does not seem to help, do not despair, but rather try a different one.

The four exercises are:

1. Worry time
2. Challenging and Perspective
3. Flooding
4. Accept your Fears

## EXERCISE 1: WORRY TIME

*One relatively simple way of working with your fears and worries is by setting up a special time during the day to think about them. This is your "worry time."*

- 1. Make an appointment with your worries and fears. Set up a ten minute block of time to worry each day. Try it for a week. Pick the same time each day for your "worry time."*
- 2. Anytime a worry comes up during the day, jot it down, put it in your pocket or purse and save it for "worry time."*
- 3. When worry time comes, take out your list. You can choose whether to think about your worries or to read them aloud to yourself. Talking to yourself and actually putting your fears into words can be very helpful because it moves them out of your head. This may feel strange at first, but give it a try. What do you have to lose?*
- 4. Keep a record of your experiences with this exercise. Each day, after thinking about your worries, or reciting them out loud, spend a minute or two reflecting on the experience and writing about it in your Journal.*

## EXERCISE 2: CHALLENGING AND PERSPECTIVE

Challenging your worries and fears is an excellent method for dealing with them. Here is an example of how it works:

Pick the fear that you wish to work on.

*Is your fear fact or opinion?*

For example, I start to cough. My first thought is,

"Oh no! Coronavirus. I may die."

Then I say to myself, "Whoa. Slow down there, girl!" and I ask myself, "Is this fact or opinion?"

The answer is obvious. It is my opinion, and I currently have no facts to back that up.

*What's the bigger picture?*

So now, I ask myself, "What's the bigger picture?"

Well, the bigger picture is that yes, Coronavirus is around, and quite infectious. It is also true that as far as we know, approximately 2-3% die from it, similar to mortality from the flu. Am I having other symptoms that might indicate the virus? Do I have a fever? Do I have shortness of breath? I do not think so, but I am not sure.

At this point, I notice how I am feeling. My heart is beating a little quickly. I am feeling a bit sweaty.

*Is there another way of looking at it?*

Are there other possibilities here? Is it possible that I am just getting a cold? Is it likely that if it is in fact the beginning of the virus, I will probably get through it just fine.

*What would someone else make of it?*

It is often helpful to think about a particular person who you respect, and imagine what they would think about that thought, what meaning they would give it, and how they would react to it.

*What advice would I give someone else in the same situation?*

Moving yourself from the patient to the helper can move you out of the loop of your worry and fear, and help you gain perspective on the situation.

Of course, if your symptoms continue, you should go to your health care provider and check them out. Research has shown that people with greater fears tend to avoid medical tests and procedures. For example, women with early stage breast cancer and high levels of fear often do not go for regular mammograms and breast exams, thus pushing off early detection and treatment at a less pervasive stage. Helping you to deal with your fears can help you access medical providers in a saner and more rational fashion.

Now it is your turn!

*1. Open your notebook. Write down your fear. Now answer the following questions, challenging your fear.*

- *Is this fear (thought) a fact or an opinion?*
- *Is there another way of looking at this fear?*
- *What would someone else make of this?*
- *What advice would you give to someone in this situation?*
- *What evidence is there that this fear/thought is true?*
- *What is the bigger picture?*
- *What is an alternative explanation that could work?*

*2. Now, reflect upon this experience. Write in your Journal what this exercise was like for you.*

*3. Try this exercise at least two or three times over the next few days.*

### EXERCISE 3: FLOODING

Robert Leahy, author of "[The Worry Cure](#)", suggests a technique known as flooding. Say you are worried that the world economy will take a nose dive, you will lose your job, have to eat into your savings, and give up your house and your current life style. While all this may in fact be true, it is more likely a sign of your catastrophizing. Now, take that worry and say it to yourself aloud 200 times. Say, "Maybe I will lose all my money and be out on the streets (substitute the correct word for you: metastases, or whatever else fits) slowly, out loud and pay attention to your thoughts. The first fifty times may make you more worried and anxious, but usually after fifty times this is just downright boring, and according to Leahy, the worry dissipates or subsides.

Now try it yourself.

1. *Choose a worry.*
2. *Put the worry in words. Preferably, this should be a short sentence. For example, "I am worried that I will lose all my money."*
3. *Say the sentence aloud, 200 (yes 200!) times.*
4. *Notice your thoughts as you say this worry aloud.*
5. *Check in with yourself after you finish the 200th time. How are you feeling?*
6. *Reflect about this exercise in your Journal.*

## EXERCISE 4: ACCEPTING YOUR FEARS

Making peace with your fears and understanding that they are normal reactions to the current situation will go a long way to reducing your worry. Your fears will not go away completely, but by making your peace with them, you will begin to see them for what they are, symptoms of anxiety, rather than signs or omens of the future. Rather than fighting with your fears, or trying to stop them, changing your relationship to them can be helpful.

For example, the next time a fear pops its ugly head, you can say, "Oh there you are, again. I was wondering when you would return." Naming your fear, giving it a silly nickname and greeting it by this nickname, may help you learn to live with your fear side by side and in relative peace. This may be the best way to go, after all.

*Now, give it a try.*

*1. Start by naming your fear. If possible, give it a nickname. (For example: the Big C)*

*2. Prepare a few sentences of greeting for your fear. Some suggestions:*

*-Hi there (Big C)! I was wondering when I'd see you again.*

*-Welcome back (Big C). Nice to see you again. Now that I have acknowledged you, you can leave.*

*See what creative or funny sentences you can come up with.*

*3. Each time your fear pops up, greet it with the nickname you have chosen.*

*4. At the end of the day spend a few minutes reflecting on this exercise and write your reflections in your Journal.*

## HOMEWORK

Remember to choose at least one exercise to try. Record in your Journal how it went. Do you feel the exercise was helpful? If yes, why was it helpful? If not, why not? Feel free to try more than one exercise, or revisit the exercise you liked, again and again.

## DAY 5: FEELING YOUR FEARS

Now that we have spent some time identifying our fears, and working on our thoughts associated with them, in this chapter we will explore how we are feeling about our fears. We will examine what sensations the fears create in our bodies, and what words we can use to express these feelings and sensations. After that we will look at ways to moderate our feelings.

### EXERCISE: HOW DO YOU FEEL?

When you experience fear or worry, how do you feel?

Anxious

Nervous

Scared

Frightened

On edge

Panicky

Terrified

Petrified

These are just some of the words people use to describe how they feel. You may add words to this list.

- 1. From the list above, pick one or two words that best characterize how you feel when you experience your fear of.*
- 2. Write them in your notebook.*
- 3. Now, rate each feeling or emotion on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "hardly at all", and 10 being "totally."*
- 4. As you consider the emotions you feel, notice what you are feeling in your body, and where.*
  - Do you feel a clenching of your stomach?*
  - Do you notice a tightening of your shoulders?*
  - Are your thighs trembling?*

- *What else do you notice in your body?*

*Pay attention to the bodily sensations that accompany each of your feelings, one at a time. Write each one of them down.*

*5. Review what you have written. Are you surprised? Is this what you expected?*

The relationship between thought, feeling, bodily sensation and behavior is circular. Each element affects the other. Let us have a look at an example.

**Fearful Thought:** I have been coughing a lot. I think that my cough may very likely mean that I am getting Coronavirus.

**Feeling:** I am feeling anxious. I feel that my life is in danger. I am downright terrified that I may die.

**Body:** My heart is racing. I am feeling sweaty, weak, and I am having difficulty concentrating.

**Thought:** I really do not feel well. I am sweating and my heart is beating so fast that I feel weak. I really must be sick. I am coughing a lot. I am sure this cough is bad. It can only mean one thing.

This circular relationship sets up a downward spiral as we make ourselves more and more anxious. In the previous chapter, we identified the thoughts related to the fear, and worked with the thoughts to reduce their strength and impact on feelings and bodily sensations.

We can also try to intervene at the level of feelings. If you are feeling the symptoms associated with anxiety, what can you do?

Remember our "Minute of Mindfulness"? This would be a good time to practice that. But before we begin let's measure how relaxed you are feeling.

### **EXERCISE: MINDFUL METER**

1. *Open your notebooks and draw a line, with 0 at the left end and 10 at the right, something like this:*

0 \_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_ 8 \_\_\_ 9 \_\_\_ 10

*Not Relaxed*

*Very*

*at All*

*Relaxed*

2. *Close your eyes for a second to determine what your level of relaxation is and mark it on the line.*

3. *Follow the instructions below for a minute of mindfulness.*
4. *When you are finished, draw another line like the one above, and mark off how you are feeling now.*
5. *Was there a difference before and after the "Minute of Mindfulness"?*

#### **Minute of Mindfulness**

- 1. Sit comfortably in your chair, feet on the ground, one hand on your belly, the other on your chest.**
- 2. Breathe in through your nose to the count of four.**
- 3. Hold your breath to the count of two**
- 4. Breathe out through your mouth, SLOWLY, to the count of 5 or 6.**
- 5. Repeat three more times.**
- 6. Notice how your body feels in the chair from the top of your head down to your toes.**
- 7. Notice any sounds.**
- 8. Notice how you are feeling inside.**

Interestingly, the more you practice this minute, the easier it gets to relax on command. If you are able to, expand the minute to two, three and even five minutes. Try to do this at least twice a day, during this entire week.

You might want to try some other relaxation exercises or exercises using guided imagery as well. While guided imagery is beyond the scope of this book, it is helpful to know that guided imagery uses our imaginations in a positive way. When the mind creates images, they can seem almost real. The body responds to images almost as if they are actual events. If we imagine food, we begin to salivate. If we can imagine a safe and beautiful place filled with people who loved us and were sending us good wishes, would we feel safe and cared for? You bet. A particularly good source for relaxation exercises and guided imagery is at [Health Journeys](#).



## DAY 6: ACTING ON YOUR FEARS

The journey continues. So far, we have examined our thoughts, noticed our feelings and now we are ready to pay attention to our behaviors. How do our fears affect our behavior?

One possible reaction to fearful thoughts is avoidance. That means, in our case, avoiding absolutely anything that has to do with Coronavirus. Some of you might avoid television or radio coverage. Others may ignore recommendations regarding quarantine, hygiene and preventive procedures. Eschewing internet forums or websites, or even people who have had the virus are also forms of avoidance. Clearly, avoidance has its costs. While the person who is avoidant may feel that he or she is successfully dealing with their fears, it takes a significant amount of energy to maintain this stance. In addition, as a result of being avoidant you may actually be neglecting your own health care.

The polar opposite of the avoidant person is the anxious person who is constantly running from doctor to doctor with even the slightest ache, pain or sniffle. Making yourself crazy, and the people around you annoyed, is not very productive. You may find yourself glued to the television for every new morsel of news, constantly scanning the internet, and in a state of high arousal. Paradoxically, this type of behavior not only does not lead to a reduction of anxiety for more than a few moments, but actually causes an increase over the long run.

Between the two extremes of avoidance and over-anxious activity, many of us swing between these two poles. On some days we may embrace avoidance and on other days we may let over activity and anxiety get the better of us. Do you know anybody like that? Can you figure out what is your main mode of behavior?

Whatever your *modus vivendi* is, it is important to consider that while thoughts and feelings affect behavior, behavior also affects the way we feel and the thoughts we have. In other words, thoughts, feelings and behaviors are cyclical and inter-dependent. If you make a change in one area, it will affect the other two areas as well. This chapter's focus on examining our behaviors and finding ways to make some changes will affect both our thoughts and our feelings.

### EXERCISE: IDENTIFYING BEHAVIOR

You will need your Journal to complete this exercise.

*1. Make a list of some of the behaviors you do when you are worried about Coronavirus.*

*If you are having trouble figuring out what you do when you worry- here are some suggestions:*

*a. worry quietly*

- b. talk to a partner or spouse*
- c. share with a close friend*
- d. call the doctor's office and talk to the nurse or doctor*
- e. schedule an appointment to see the doctor*
- f. eat*
- g. drink alcohol*
- h. have trouble falling asleep*
- i. yell at the people around you or act in a short tempered manner*
- j. try to ignore the worry*
- k. avoid thinking about it*
- l. keep yourself busy*
- m. keep the TV tuned to the news all day long*
- n. spend a lot of time on websites and internet forums related to Coronavirus.*

*What else??*

*2. Now that you have identified some of your behaviors, have a look at your list, and see if there are any behaviors that you would like to change. Choose one of those behaviors.*

*3. Write the behavior at the top of a new page.*

*4. Now, ask yourself the following questions, and write the answers in your Journal.*

- a. Is this behavior helpful to you? How?*
- b. Is this behavior harmful to you? In what way?*
- c. What are the consequences of this behavior?*
- d. How do you feel when you behave like this?*
- e. What are your thoughts after behaving like this?*

*5. Now, let us see how we can go about changing that behavior. Ask yourself the following questions and write down the answers in your Journal.*

*a. Have you ever been in a similar situation and tried something that worked better for you? What was it? Why did it work better?*

*b. What do you think someone else in your situation might do? Try to think about someone specific, perhaps someone you like or admire.*

*c. If you were to try this alternative behavior, how do you think it would affect your feelings? Your thoughts?*

*d. What might be the consequences of doing something different?*

*6. How are you feeling right now?*

Let's take an example to demonstrate this exercise.

*Let's say that when I start to worry about how Coronavirus is going to affect my life, I worry quietly. As I worry quietly, the worry usually grows. I remember in the past that when I shared this worry with either my spouse, a friend or my physician I felt much better. I am thinking that my first step would be to share with a good friend, or with my partner. I would feel less alone, and less worried. If this doesn't help, the next step would be to make an appointment to speak with my doctor. Now, I am feeling much better and feel like I have an action plan.*

You can repeat this exercise several times, looking at your behavior in different situations. The more you do this, the more you will realize that you have choices, and that your automatic or default response is not always the one that will be most helpful. Opening up options and choosing new modes of behavior can go a long way to improving the way you feel.

Now that you have completed this exercise , pamper yourself a bit. Go for a walk, have a cup of tea, sit down with a good book or a good friend. Do something that makes you feel good.



## DAY 7: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Congratulations! You have reached Day Seven. It has been quite a week, and quite a journey! We have covered a lot of ground very quickly, and you may want to actually slow down the clock, and turn each day into a week. Thus, you can spend a week learning how to breathe, another week looking at your thoughts, and so on. This will give you more time to reflect on where you are, as well as a chance to incorporate some of the suggested changes into your life.

Change takes time and does not usually happen overnight. This book has introduced you to many new ideas and activities, and now you can go back at your leisure, and choose the chapters or exercises that really spoke to you.

As you review each exercise, you may be surprised to discover that each time you do an exercise the experience will be different. There is an ancient Greek proverb of the philosopher Heraclitus that speaks to this. "No man ever steps into the same river twice, for it is not the same river and he is not the same man." What that means, is that life is always changing, as are our feelings, thoughts and behaviors.

As you integrate the various pieces of the puzzle of thoughts, feelings and behavior as they relate to your life in general, and more specifically to the way you are dealing with your fears related to the Coronavirus can be helpful to consider activities that can help you cope better. Psychological research shows that people cope better when they engage in activities that:

1. Give them a sense of achievement
2. Bring them closer to others
3. Are enjoyable

Think about the activities that fill your day. How many of them provide one, two or all three of these benefits? If you are curious about how your typical day or week measure up, try the following exercise.

## EXERCISE: ACTIVITY LOG

You will need your Journal for this exercise.

1. Title a fresh page in your Journal with the words "Activity Log."
2. Then number the lines from 1-24. Each line represents an hour of the day.
3. Draw four columns, with the first being the widest, and the last three of equal width. Title the first column- Activity, the second column- Achievement, the third column-Closeness and the fourth column- Enjoyment. The table should look something like this:

hour	Activity	Achievement	Closeness	Enjoyment
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

4. Think about yesterday. What did you do? How did you fill your hours? Try to recall what you did, and fill in the activity column. Some activities may take several hours (for example, sleep). Some may take much less than an hour.

5. *After you have completed the activity log, rate each activity on a scale from one to five. Ask yourself:*

*- How much of a sense of achievement did I feel when I finished that activity?*

*- How close did I feel to other people as I was doing that activity, or immediately afterwards?*

*- How much enjoyment did I get out of the activity?*

6. *Have a look at your chart. What do you notice? How many activities give you a feeling of accomplishment? How many bring you closer to others? How many give you a sense of enjoyment?*

7. *Balance is key here. Most individuals need a healthy mix of all three areas: achievement, closeness to others and enjoyment. Have a look at what is missing in your life, and think about ways you might increase it. Do you need to find something meaningful to do, to fill your days with a sense of achievement? Are you working very hard, and achieving lots, but feeling very lonely? How much are you enjoying the activities you are doing? Is there a way to infuse more enjoyment into your day?*

## CONCLUSION

As you continue to navigate the journey of life, I wish you all the best and hope that some of these tools, exercises and ideas have helped you. I would love to hear from you about your experiences with these exercises, and hope to continue improving this book with your feedback and comments. I can be reached at: [Naomi.baum@gmail.com](mailto:Naomi.baum@gmail.com) or through my website at [www.naomibaum.com](http://www.naomibaum.com).

Safe journeys and best of luck!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Naomi Baum is a psychologist director of Resilience Associates, an international consulting firm in trauma and resilience building. She is a consultant for the Amit Network in Israel, as well as on the staff of the Center for Mind Body Medicine in the USA. She is the former Director of the Resilience Unit at the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma, in Jerusalem. She received her Ph.D. from Bryn Mawr College in the USA and was a fellow at the Mandel School of Educational Leadership, Israel. She has been a consulting psychologist for schools, and taught courses in psychology at the university level in both the USA and Israel.

Naomi has created and implemented resilience-building programs for those exposed to trauma. In addition to working extensively with schools and parents she has applied her model of resilience building to work with first responders, rabbis, nurses, and many other communities affected by trauma. This work has taken her to such far-flung places as Haiti, Mexico and Biloxi, Mississippi. While Naomi has accrued many degrees and much work experience, her real understanding of kids and families comes from being married to the same man for forty years, and raising, with him, their seven children. She is the proud grandmother of twelve. Her hobbies include scuba diving, travelling, reading and biking. She lives with her husband in Efrat, Israel. She can be reached at [www.naomibaum.com](http://www.naomibaum.com)