

# CTRL - ALT – DEL



Abatzidis, S  
BSc (Phys & Micro; PUCHE), BVSc (UP)  
Technical Specialist - Companion Animals  
MSD Animal Health South Africa, 20 Spartan Road, Spartan 1619  
New Insights Certified VIP Life Coach  
Founder of Influential Life Coaching  
<http://drmatscoach.co.za>

Author of the published book "Life outside your comfort zone. Better and beyond all expectations".

Perhaps we can all remember hearing about the COVID19 pandemic starting in another country. Some of us were thinking that it would never reach our country and some of us immediately dismissed the news as trivial. A few short weeks later **the world has changed dramatically** for many.

We all try and stay abreast with current events and keep our lives in order and for most people, keeping a balance and **making sure that we remain in control is challenging**. However, this new concern may seem overwhelming on top of the local scene in South Africa, threats to the climate, the economy and all other personal and indirect worries you were already had. Suddenly handwashing and ensuring that essentials like water, electricity, soap and food became of the outmost importance. Your children's schools were closed. Lockdown was announced, masks, gloves and social distancing became the norm.

If you live with anxiety, or any other mental or physical health issue, you might feel more stressed and anxious each day. And while preventing loss of life is a key priority in the management of any disaster, the significant impact of a pandemic on mental health cannot be denied. It is much tougher to deal with an invisible threat and we just **need to learn to process it differently** to what we are accustomed to. The purpose of this article is to provide support to its readers because we know things will get better!!!

## IDENTIFYING THE "INVISIBLE" THREAT

COVID-19 is real and medical professionals around the world emphasize that its spread will likely continue. To **mitigate risk and keep yourself and others safe**, it's important to make sure you're getting accurate information about this virus and the ways it can spread.

COVID-19 causes the following main **symptoms**:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue and other flu-like symptoms

If you or someone you love has a confirmed or even possible case, you may feel terrified, but keep in mind that although the virus can cause serious symptoms, even death, many people have mild cases.

The current mortality rate is between 3 – 4%. However, this rate is not an accurate picture of the actual mortality rate because we don't yet have full knowledge of how many people have the virus, or how the virus affects the body.

## COVID19 IMPACTS US MENTALLY TOO

We cannot deny that this world-wide **pandemic has impacted our emotional well-being**. Our daily routines have changed dramatically for most of us both directly and indirectly, because it has ultimately impacted and changed the way we interact with others. Human beings are fundamentally social creatures and all the changes that have taken place can feel very overwhelming. Everything mentioned so far all rolled up into one and continuing for an undefined period, understandably, can cause anxiety and fear.

Most individuals I have interacted with and asked how they are coping, instinctively deny expressing their fear and anxiety for various reasons. **Symptoms of anxiety and stress** may show up in your mood and behaviour, whether you recognize them or not. Signs you might notice include:

- Trouble sleeping
- Loss of concentration or focus
- Appetite changes
- Restlessness or jumpiness
- Anxiety-related stomach issues
- Irritability, shorter temper than usual, and other mood changes
- Ever-present feelings of nervousness or worry

Spare a thought for people living with existing anxiety conditions, such as panic disorder, general anxiety, or obsessions and compulsions (OCD), which may notice worsened symptoms or a sense of losing control. Symptoms of these conditions are challenging enough already without the added stress of a global pandemic. Increased severity of symptoms could trigger feelings of hopelessness or depression, even thoughts of suicide. Health anxiety, a condition marked by persistent fears of contracting serious illness, may reach a level that's difficult to manage for some people. Those with **health anxiety** may:

- Feel unable to stop seeking out information on COVID-19
- Evaluate themselves for symptoms with high frequency
- Experience extreme anxiety and fear over contracting the virus
- Become trapped in a loop of imagining worst-case scenarios

## LOCKDOWN, ISOLATION AND OTHER LIFE CHANGES RESULTING FROM THE PANDEMIC

The first case of COVID19 arrived in South Africa on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March from Italy and our lifestyle started changing in many ways. As time during lockdown has progressed, there may have been a shift in some of us to feeling more worried about how various changes will affect our lives than getting sick. Those **feelings are very normal, and we should not be denying them or hiding them**.

There have been situations which may have contributed to individual wanting to **self-isolate or need to self-quarantine** due to possible exposure to a potential source. You might be juggling worries about your well-being, but also basic and essential survival. Perhaps you live alone already, and you may feel concerned about how you're going to make it through the lockdown period alone at home.

These are unprecedented times and circumstances and it is understandable to feel frustrated or stressed. Some of us are better equipped to deal with **loneliness and boredom** than others. Loneliness can mean different things, depending on one's situation and individual needs, but it is generally considered to be a negative or undesirable state. Feelings of loneliness may develop when one lacks fulfilment in one's social relationships, but just as a person who is alone is not necessarily lonely, a person can be lonely without being alone. A person in a romantic relationship who has few friends may feel lonely in the partner's absence or find the relationship to be somehow lacking in other ways, and a person who has many strong friendships might still feel lonely at times. An individual who is not in a relationship and desires romantic companionship might also experience loneliness. In addition to that, there may be reasons that you can't work from home, which would logically contribute towards feeling concerned and stressed about losing your job in the case of an adult working individual, or missing more school/university classes than you can make up easily in the case of active learners in various stages of their education.

The pandemic has changed peoples' ability to work and depending on the industry that you are in, you may or may not be permitted to actively work. The same disability may be extended further to concerns about a potential scarcity of resources. **Every economy in the world has been affected** by this pandemic which creates uncertainty about the future, impact on the world, as well as the immediate impact on your life after the pandemic. The scarcity mindset can lead to panic and intense distress.

### **HIGH RISK**

Continuous assimilation and studying of statistics during the pandemic have yielded a trend suggesting that the population most severely affected by this new coronavirus appears to be older adults, particularly those with underlying health conditions. This may have led people to avoid older adults or actively discriminate against those most at risk. Other vulnerable populations include unsheltered and homeless communities, groups many people lack compassion and respect for even in ordinary times, as well as people in prisons. Perhaps you feel that such trends are beyond your control but consider that your difference is always made by speaking to individuals and that our words and attitude can have an impact. Making your goal to **spread kindness instead of stigma**.

Here is an example: calling COVID-19 "the Chinese coronavirus." does nothing constructive to increase awareness and compassion. It is far more likely that it will promote discrimination and xenophobia, only contributing a great deal of harm in already tense times. This virus may have originated in China, but that has little to do with Chinese people living in other countries all over the world. Avoiding or fearing people of Asian descent is unhelpful and encourages prejudice.

**Stigmatization** occurs when people hold negative beliefs or attitudes about individuals who are members of certain groups or communities. Individuals who are the object of stigma may experience negative attitudes from the general population (public stigma) or from themselves (self-stigma). These negative beliefs may lead to stereotyping, social prejudice, and acts of discrimination.

### **LET'S BE CONSTRUCTIVE – CONTROL WHAT IS YOURS TO CONTROL**

Sometimes it helps to take a step back and look at the big picture for a short while before focusing on what actions you should be taking. We all know that the toll of COVID-19 isn't entirely physical, but perhaps it is more possible to understand that **it's possible to manage this emotional burden in healthy and productive ways**.

These tips can help make it easier to navigate through this pandemic period:

- A) **Be Prepared:** get organized for quarantine or self-isolation provides us with a sense of control and relief. Panic buying is over-preparing and may prevent other people in your area from accessing needed resources, which may very well contribute to the feeling of scarcity. What do the experts recommend? Most disaster recommendations encourage stocking up on **two weeks' worth of basic supplies** and non-perishable food items. Avoid buying more than that, unless absolutely needed. This is particularly important if you live in a small town with few grocery options.
- B) **Be mindful of exposure:** keeping yourself informed on facts about the virus and new updates from federal and state governing agencies is recommended. It's important to know what's going on and hearing about relief coming to your area can help relieve some of your stress. However, indulging in every social media on the virus can increase tension and stress and quickly become overwhelming. Allocate a given amount of time to update yourself for the day and then end it. Have one or two **trusted sources of information** e.g. World Health Organization (WHO) and then simply follow their recommended protocols to maintain hygiene and cleanliness.
- C) **Stay social:** although large gatherings are banned, but that doesn't mean you have to forego contact entirely. If you don't live in a high-risk area, you're likely safe to interact with a friend or loved one, provided neither of you have known exposure. If you're concerned, try social distancing—avoid locations with a lot of other people and maintain 1-2 metres while you spend time together. Limit in-person interactions which most companies will do anyway, ask if you can work from home, or take time off if possible. Do what makes you most comfortable.

You can also use digital platforms like Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, Google Meet, Messenger, LinkedIn and WhatsApp to keep in touch with friends and family around the globe. Even if you can't spend time together face-to-face, it's important to maintain connection with your loved ones. **Physical isolation may be necessary, but total isolation is not.**

- D) Practice good self-care: if you enjoy **exercise**, not being able to get out can add to your stress and anxiety. Exercise helps relieve mental health symptoms for many, so idleness can cause a lot of distress. If you're healthy, you might try running laps around your house, up and down stairs, in your backyard, or around your apartment complex. We can follow online workout videos (YouTube has plenty). If you prefer milder options, try simple stretches, yoga, Pilates and gentle calisthenics. Alternatively, meditation, deep breathing exercises, and other relaxation techniques. These practices can offer relief from stress and help you get better sleep.

Comfort food might seem appealing, and there's nothing wrong with enjoying your favourite meal or some junk food. But try to **eat a balanced diet** as much as possible. These foods help promote wellness in body and mind. If you're having trouble purchasing food, investigate community resources and ask to see what other people are doing in your area.

You might have trouble **sleeping** but maintain a normal sleep schedule (waking up and sleeping at the same time) as much as possible. Avoiding technology, particularly news and other media, for at least an hour before bedtime, can be very helpful.

Perhaps having a warm bath - **aromatherapy** (scented candles, essential oils or relaxing herbs, a bubble bath, or anything else you have on hand that provides a soothing fragrance). A **calming environment** - being outdoors, especially in good weather, can also offer health benefits, so get outside as much as possible. Sunlight and fresh air from your own backyard can still boost your mood.

The way you think and the things that you're filling your mind with greatly influence your psychological and physical well-being. Mental self-care includes doing things that **keep your mind sharp**, like puzzles/hobbies, or learning about a subject that fascinates you. You might find reading books or watching movies that inspire you fuels/challenges your mind in a pleasant and unpredictable manner. Mental self-care also involves doing things that help you stay mentally healthy. Practicing self-compassion and acceptance, for example, helps you maintain a healthier inner dialogue.

Research shows that a lifestyle including religion or spirituality (some people think of this as a general awareness of not only the things, people and events around them, but also themselves) is generally a healthier lifestyle. Nurturing your spirit, however, doesn't have to involve religion. **It can involve anything that helps you develop a deeper sense of meaning, understanding, or connection with the universe.** Whether you enjoy meditation, attending a religious service, or praying, spiritual self-care is important. Sometimes plain time in silence or in nature may be what is needed.

- E) Do things you enjoy: if you're staying at home, there is a bright side - you may have more free time. Take advantage by allocating to enjoy books, movies, board and video games with family, or crafts. Taking time for **enjoyable activities can not only offer a distraction, it can help keep your spirits up**. Maybe you have an aspiration to learn a new language – try apps like Duolingo. Use YouTube videos to teach yourself a new skill, like knitting, baking, or household repair. Catch up on spring cleaning or projects you haven't had time for previously. Pick up an old hobby, like art, music, or poetry writing.

It's normal to have some anxiety around what could happen. The current situation is unprecedented, and uncertainty can cause a lot of fear. If you're having trouble staying positive, remember **you're not alone**.

### **ALTER THE WAY YOU THINK**

I am a strong believer that success and happiness are all about mindset. **Your mindset and belief system affect everything in your life** from what you think and feel to how you act and react to the world around you. In order to get through challenges and overcome obstacles, your mindset needs to match your aspirations, otherwise, it might be holding you back from getting where you want to be.

Here are 7 effective ways you can upgrade your mindset:

1. Change your Self-Talk: the conversations you have with yourself are a direct reflection of your mindset. If you are telling yourself "I am not good enough to overcome this" or "I am not strong enough to survive this", your thoughts will create your reality and your mindset will hold you back from having the result you want. To upgrade your

mindset, change your negative self-talk to an empowerment speech. Sounds cliché but telling yourself “I can do this” or “I got this”, really works.

2. Change your Language: After changing your inner thought dialogue and the story you are telling yourself, change the way you talk to people around you. Avoid phrases like “I am always like this” or “I am always doing this”. Furthermore, make it a habit to talk about the things that are going well instead of complaining and talking about your problems. This will encourage a mindset of abundance instead of fear and lack.
3. Determine the mindset you need and act: Pick a result you want to achieve and ask yourself: “Which mindset do I need to achieve this?” and “Which mindset do people have that were successful at this?”. For example, healthy & fit people might share the mindset “I love taking care of my body, nourishing it with whole foods and exercising every day.”. If it’s your goal to stay healthy & fit during lockdown, act as if you already HAVE the mindset of a healthy & fit person. This way, you are basically tricking your brain to adopt a new mindset and reinforcing it with action.
4. Learn & Apply: read books from great minds to understand and adopt their thinking. Read books about how the mind and brain works. Learn from mindset experts through online courses, events, and coaching. Here are some authors you could investigate: Carol Dweck, Gabrielle Bernstein, Thomas Oppong and online Courses from Denise DT for upgrading your money mindset.
5. Interact with people that match your desired mindset: whatever the desired result is that you want, start interacting with people that are already experiencing what you wish to do or have. It is easier to adopt a new mindset when you see that it is already working for other people. Learn how they think and adapt their daily habits to match their mindset.
6. Create new habits to support your mindset change: integrate powerful habits into your day that help your mindset change and re-enforce your thinking with action. If you are upgrading from “fixed” to “growth” mindset, schedule time for learning and start noting down your learnings and achievements every day. If you are upgrading from “destination” to “journey” mindset, practice being mindful, enjoying the present moment and celebrating small successes.
7. Jump out of your comfort zone: if you put yourself in situations that challenge you, you have no other choice than to rise to the occasion and upgrade your mindset. It becomes a necessity to survive. Therefore, ask yourself “What situations can I put myself in that will require me to operate on a higher mindset?”. Basically, the idea is to engineer your environment to train your brain!

### DELETE WHAT DOES NOT SERVE YOU

You have certain beliefs in your mind that are having a significant impact on how you can perform under the current circumstances. Beliefs about money, business, your relationships, our health, the economy, etc... and for the sake of keeping things simple let’s call all of these **‘limiting beliefs’**. Think of these limiting beliefs as invisible weights that weigh you down as you are trying to take off with a motorbike. Some days your engine might be ready to go full throttle, but you can still feel something holding you back from creating momentum in your life.

Sometimes, when our **awareness** is fully engaged, you might be able to hear your limiting beliefs floating around in your many thoughts and they may sound something like this: “I wasn’t prepared for this pandemic”, “I don’t have enough reserves”, “I didn’t stock up on enough provisions”, “If this carries on any longer, my business will have to close”. We all know what those thoughts are that keep us awake at night.

In order to understand limiting beliefs a little more, we need to look at the **possible sources**. Limiting beliefs are often installed in our minds by our well-meaning family, our friends, media, our societal upbringing (past events and experiences) and later in life, our creative thinking. It is 100% not your fault that these beliefs exist in your mind, but it is 100% your responsibility to take steps to remove these. Identify them, decide if they serve you, and delete the ones that do not serve you right now.

Most people are generally good at identifying their limiting beliefs. Where most people battle in dealing with their limiting beliefs is that they take steps to become aware of them, but they do nothing to **remove or replace them**. Today, I want to help you start removing these limiting beliefs from your subconscious mind once and for all. **Do these five steps**, in this order, every time you feel that something internal is holding you back:

1. **Name Your Limiting Belief:** try sentence completion to have your mind fill in the blank - write down "I am afraid that..." and finish the sentence ten times. The sentences that come out in this stage are your limiting beliefs that hold you back. Example: "I am afraid that... I will have to close my business soon"

If you can't think of ten different beliefs try thinking about multiple areas of your life... financial, romantic, social, happiness, vocation, health, spirituality, personal development, etc.

2. **Face Your Limiting Belief:** now under each of your limiting beliefs identified in step one above, you want to write 3-5 'reasons why' you fear those things (some people call these reasons 'reference legs' that may be supporting that belief). This is really digging into the core of these issues and is often more surprising than the beliefs themselves e.g. "I am afraid that I will always struggle economically...because my reserves were depleted during the pandemic"
3. **Destroy Your Limiting Beliefs:** the third step is about disproving your limiting beliefs by discrediting them. Under each of your limiting beliefs, write down as many points of evidence to the contrary as you can. Go for at least five per limiting belief and break those 'reference legs' you had in the previous step. Think of everything in your life (no matter how big or small they may seem) that stands in contrast to your old limiting belief and make note of them e.g. "I don't need to fear struggling economically because I am an increasingly learning about more and more ways of how I can earn an income from home."
4. **Write Your New Empowered Belief** - now here is the real ninja part...reference the old belief briefly, and then in a realistic but compelling manner, state the new empowered belief for each of your ten limiting beliefs e.g. "Anytime I have put mind to it and have used my knowledge and experience, I have been able to generate income for myself with ease."
5. **Repeat When Needed** - Some beliefs are rooted more deeply than others. Although one session is often enough to give you massive clarity, you may find it helpful to repeat this process multiple times over the course of a month to really uproot your old limiting beliefs.

**Guarantee** - there's nothing quite like removing an unconscious limiting belief that has held you back for years, to feel the true freedom and ease that a free mind enables you with.

## **AWARENESS**

Always watch out for new limiting beliefs that are thrown at you by others. A certain level of **scepticism** towards any advice that is thrown your way is a **necessary and healthy** step in your progress. Whenever people say phrases such as "the way things are...", "you should...", or "the only way to...", then you can be certain that a limiting belief is being tossed your way. Learn to recognize these statements for what they are... someone putting their limiting belief on you.

Keep your logic in the front of your mind, while feeling deeper than your thought process, and **set your life's path on your terms**. Good luck with your progress, and feel free to reach out if you want more help with the exercise. Stay well and stay safe!!

## **References**

1. Coronavirus anxiety – Helpful expert tips and resources. (2020, March 14). Anxiety and Depression Association of America. Retrieved from <https://adaa.org/finding-help/coronavirus-anxiety-helpful-resources>
2. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): Manage anxiety & stress. (2020, March 14). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
3. Goodman, K. (2019, December 7). Health anxiety—What is it and how you can overcome it. Anxiety and Depression Association of America. Retrieved from <https://adaa.org/webinar/consumer/health-anxiety-what-it-and-how-you-can-overcome-it>
4. Managing fears and anxiety around coronavirus. (2020). Retrieved from <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/fearsanxiety-coronavirus.pdf>

5. NAMI updates on the coronavirus. (2020, March 13). National Alliance on Mental Illness. Retrieved from <https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/NAMI-News/2020/NAMI-Updates-on-the-Coronavirus>
6. Symptoms. (2020, March 14). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html>
7. Chronic stress puts your health at risk. (2016, April 21). Retrieved from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20046037?pg=1>
8. Fact sheet on stress. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml>
9. Scott, E. (2018, January 31). Unhealthy responses to stress and common bad habits. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellmind.com/unhealthy-responses-to-stress-bad-habits-to-avoid-3145260>
10. Stress: America's #1 health problem. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.stress.org/americas-1-health-problem>
11. "Health updates on Coronavirus on 9 March 2020". South African Ministry of Health. 9 March 2020. Retrieved 9 March 2020.
12. Killeen, C. (1998). Loneliness: An epidemic in modern society. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 28(4), 762-770.
13. McWhirter, B. (1990). Loneliness: A review of current literature, with implications for counselling and research. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68, 417-422.
14. Rokach, A. (2001). Strategies of coping with loneliness throughout the lifespan. *Current Psychology: Developmental, Learning, Personality, Social*, 20(1), 3-18.
15. Stickley, A., Koyanagi, A., Kuposov, R., Schwab-Stone, M., & Ruchkin, V. (2014). Loneliness and health risk behaviours among Russian and U.S. adolescents: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*, 14, 366. Retrieved from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/14/366>
16. Corrigan, P. W. & Watson, A. C. (2002). Understanding the impact of stigma on people with mental illness. *World Psychiatry*, 1(1), 16-20. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1489832>
17. Liz Huber (2018). 7 Ways to Level Up your Mindset. <https://medium.com/swlh/7-ways-to-level-up-your-mindset-5395fd103310>
18. Jordan Gray (2016). How To Remove Your Limiting Beliefs In Under 10 Minutes. <https://www.jordangrayconsulting.com/remove-your-limiting-beliefs/>
19. Abatzidis, S. (2015). Life outside your comfort zone. Better and beyond all expectations.

First Name:		Phone Number:	
Last Name:		Address:	
Certification No:		Postal Code:	
Veterinary Practice:		City:	
E-mail Address:		Province:	

## CPD Questionnaire – CONTROL, ALTERNATE, DELETE

### Question 1

Which of the following statements about COVID19 is FALSE?

- A. It is classified as a worldwide pandemic
- B. Fever is not one of the symptoms
- C. Coughing has been reported as one of the possible symptoms
- D. Being a virus with a tropism for the respiratory system, it makes sense that a shortness of breath may be how it manifests in people affected with the virus
- E. COVID19 has manifested with fatigue and other flu-like symptoms as well

### Question 2

Which of the following symptoms of anxiety and stress are correct?

- A. Trouble sleeping & loss of concentration/focus
- B. Appetite changes, restlessness or jumpiness
- C. Anxiety-related stomach issues and nervousness or worry
- D. Irritability, shorter temper than usual, and other mood changes
- E. All of the above

### Question 3

When did the first case of COVID19 arrive in South Africa?

- A. 17<sup>th</sup> November 2019
- B. 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2019
- C. 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020
- D. 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020
- E. 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Question 4

The segment of the population most severely affected by this new coronavirus appears to be \_\_\_\_\_, which ONE of the following statements is CORRECT?

- A. Infants
- B. Children between 5-9 years old
- C. Older adults
- D. Teenagers
- E. Elite athletes

Question 5

Stigmatizations leads to which of the following social and behavioural phenomena?

- A. Stereotyping
- B. Social prejudice
- C. Acts of discrimination
- D. None of the above
- E. A, B and C

Question 6

Which of the following is NOT a reasonable way to manage the emotional burden of the pandemic and national lockdown circumstances?

- A. Panic
- B. Be prepared
- C. Stay social
- D. Practice good self-care
- E. Do things you enjoy

Question 7

Which one of the following statements regarding upgrading your mindset are FALSE?

- A. Change your self-talk and language
- B. Admit yourself into a psychiatric hospital
- C. Determine the mindset you need and act on it
- D. Interact with people that match your desired mindset
- E. Create new habits to support your mindset change

Question 8

Consider the possible sources of limiting beliefs. Which ONE of the following is CORRECT?

- A. Friends and Family
- B. Social media
- C. Past events and experiences
- D. Creative thinking
- E. All of the above

Question 9

Which one of the following steps in removing limiting beliefs from your subconscious mind is FALSE?

- A. Confront your parents for giving you limiting beliefs
- B. Name your limiting beliefs
- C. Face your limiting beliefs
- D. Destroy your limiting beliefs
- E. Write your new empowered beliefs

Question 10

Which ONE of the following qualities is considered necessary and healthy for us to apply in the future when people share their ideas and beliefs with us?

- A. Hatred
- B. Fear
- C. Scepticism
- D. Joy
- E. None of the above