



# Tips to keep you airborne!



10 tips to help you stay calm in tough times

April 2020

It goes without saying that a great number of people are stressed and anxious in the current global climate; anxious about their lives, anxious about their loved ones, anxious about their livelihoods, anxious about their larders, anxious about their leaders...the list goes on.

Crises cause stress and stress causes mistakes, so this begs the question...how are you coping? How is your family coping? How is your team coping? How is your organization coping?

What strategies are you employing to keep a handle on your stress so that you can cope better on a day-to-day basis?

If you were to take an individual, team or organizational 'selfie' and give yourself a coping rating on a self-help scale from zero to ten, where ten equals fabulous and zero equals terrible, what would the number be?

But more importantly, in which direction are you facing? It's easy to slip from distress to disorder when fear, overwhelm and lack of control abounds, so step one is to use strategies to calm yourself so that you can figure out how to nudge a notch higher on that self-help scale.

To help calm the amygdala, that part of the brain that acts as the smoke alarm for danger, switching on the fight-flight-freeze response, a quick fix is to practise deep, diaphragmatic breathing to engage the parasympathetic nervous system's rest and digest response. Dr Andrew Weil's 4-7-8 breathing is excellent for instantly soothing the nerves and lowering symptoms of anxiety.

Know that blood vessels feeding the pre-frontal cortex of your brain, aka it's CEO, can get suppressed by up to 80% when highly stressed, which limits oxygen and makes you dumb!



**Caroline Crosbie**  
**CONSULTING**  
Tapping into Personal and Professional Wellness

Caroline Crosbie Consulting  
[www.carolinecrosbie.com.au](http://www.carolinecrosbie.com.au)  
[info@carolinecrosbie.com.au](mailto:info@carolinecrosbie.com.au)  
0416 154 259

Now that you've calmed a little, consider doing a STOP-START-STAY assessment to figure out what thoughts, feelings or behaviours that might not be serving you, in which case try to limit or give them up e.g. reaching for your phone upon awakening to tune into the latest news updates, igniting an instant anxious 'tone' for the day.

Perhaps you could start your day doing a couple of minutes of mindfulness meditation instead, a powerful tool for helping calm and control the 'monkey mind'.

And if what you're doing ain't broke, what should you keep on keeping on? Being supportive and showing empathy with colleagues who might be feeling less resilient than you? If this sounds like you, stay with it.

Just know that roughly 80% of the 75,000 thoughts we have daily tend towards negativity (yes, we're hard-wired for negativity for survival) but in all likelihood that percentage in the current climate is probably higher, so it's going to pay, now more than ever, to focus on the remaining small percentage that matters.

It's going to pay to focus on positives as they emerge and look for the gifts in these troubled times. We know from Pareto's 80:20 rule that 80% of effects come from 20% of causes, so narrowing your focus on the positive can yield a mighty result in terms of improving how you feel.



Now that you're feeling a little calmer and more positive, from the smorgasbord of 10 strategies below, choose 2 strategies you think might work best to help nudge you up your self-help scale some more:

1. Take control: if, for example, the unrelenting news feeds are making you anxious, turn them off and tune in when you are feeling calmer.
2. Avoid people who make you anxious if possible and try to reduce the amount of time you spend with them.



3. Avoid unhealthy habits: (too much caffeine, sugar, alcohol etc.) and eat a mood boosting diet (e.g. Mediterranean) to bolster feel-good serotonin levels and reduce stress levels.

4. Connect and share your thoughts and feelings with positive people in your network to help buffer against the effects of stress. A problem shared, is a problem halved. Spread your wings virtually, not virally.

5. Try and do something you enjoy every day, be it stretching on a yoga mat, playing an instrument, listening to uplifting music or reading a riveting book.

6. Create a solid bedtime routine even if it feels as if you have 'nothing to get up to' and aim to get between 7 and 9 hours of rest and repair every night.

7. If you can't sleep, don't stay in bed. Get a pen and paper and start writing down all your thoughts, worries, fears, doubts, feelings. The more you offload, the calmer you'll feel. When you name, you tame...

8. Practise daily mindfulness to stay present, let go of worries and anxious thoughts and set a positive intention for the day. Leave your phone for later.

9. Learn to challenge anxious thoughts and look for evidence that the thought is true and if there's a more realistic way of looking at the situation.

10. Get outdoors for a brief, brisk exercise break to boost calming neurochemicals, clear the mind, and soak up some cleansing sunshine, as long as you're keeping a safe physical distance from others, that is.

In the meantime, Headspace, Mood Mission and Smiling Mind are apps that will definitely help put your mind at rest, but if at the end of the day it all gets a little overwhelming and too hard doing it alone, don't be shy about accessing your company's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) service for some professional help.

Here's to being self-aware and leading from within. Remember, just two will do.

*Caroline*

*PS - Whenever you're ready, work with me VIRTUALLY to see how you, and/or your team can stay AIRBORNE in these turbulent times, send me an email with "yes, more information please".*

*Spread the word...*

*PPS - Dominic Siow, my great friend and trusted member of my inner circle, has made his e-book "What's GREAT about this? How to be Resilient and Thrive through Disruption and Change." available now for \$0.99 and paperback at 50% off. Check it out at [www.eqstrategist.com/products/book](http://www.eqstrategist.com/products/book)*



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[info@carolinecrosbie.com.au](mailto:info@carolinecrosbie.com.au)  
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