

# COVID CRAZIES

by Karen Cooper, Counsellor, Harmony Centre

There are many times in the last 6 months that my daughter and I look at each other and shake our heads and say “COVID crazies”. This is often in response to our own over reaction to something mundane or someone else over reacting.

Though “COVID crazies” is by no means a technical psychological term, at this time in history, it sums up our reactions to all things COVID.

Let me give you some examples that you may be able to relate to.

- Wanting to scream at a stranger in the face because the required mask is only covering the mouth not the nose. NO, you can't do it!
- Increased anxiety while shopping (or at work). Mask, sanitize, glove at some stores, and keep away and out of the way of other people. Although I'm getting used to the routine I admit that by the time I have my groceries I'm often royally ticked off
- Increased, almost out of control anger. Part of our brain understands why we must do what we're doing. For example, the changes in church worship. But the other part is angry. We want to walk away from the church. After all (we tell ourselves) 'If I can't sing, shake hands or hug what's the point in going to church!'
- An increase in the number of protests
- Violence in the home is on the rise. Even worse when victims are trapped in the home 24/7
- Lack of motivation
- Difficulty with sleeping
- Weight increase
- Unable to take vacations from home is increasing our stress
- Intolerance of any change
- Increased loneliness
- Increased anxiety and stress leaving many feeling trapped

So why are we humans reacting this way? It comes down to how we deal with threats. We have basically three ways we may react depending on our personality, the degree of threat and how we're feeling at the time. If we are hungry, tired, stressed beyond what we are able to normally handle we will react in a way that is not what others would think is normal for us. The three choices are Fight, Flight or Freeze: screaming and yelling, running away or hiding, or do nothing and usually regretting it later.

What are the threats in a pandemic? Let me list just a few.

- Our rights to make choices
- Our freedom to go where and when we want
- Our livelihoods (Will I get a job or lose my job?)
- Our health or the health of a loved one. (Will someone I know die because of COVID or will I?)
- The need for physical contact with our world as we knew it before COVID. In 1946 Dr. Spitz took notice of institutional babies “wasting away” despite adequate food and physical care. What they were missing was touch, being held, cuddled and played with. We need hugs! We need face to face in the same room contact.
- Financial instability, which can lead to housing and food inadequacies.
- And, I am sure, many more depending on your own individual circumstances.

So how can we deal with our COVID crazies?

- Talk to someone. Be open and honest to them with your gut reaction to all this.
- If you live alone find a few friends to be in your hug bubble. But be aware if the bubble is overlapping with other bubbles.
- Stop arguing with yourself about learning new technology. Pastor Lori taught me how to use Zoom on Friday. I did manage to get on and participate. I never found how to do the ‘Brady Bunch’ squares but I think I would call it successful.
- If motivation is a problem write out a simple routine. Include something you enjoy.
- Get outside every day. It doesn’t have to be a major outing. Start with a walk to the street and back. If unable to do that, then just step out the door for a few minutes.
- If angers and frustrations are building up in your household, it’s time to start a conversation before someone loses it and explodes. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Start conversations with ‘I feel’ statements don’t attack the other person.
- If you are hearing impaired like me then be honest about your hearing loss and teach, teach, teach! Hearing is especially difficult with masks with or without hearing aids. Educate others about slowing their speech (if they talk fast), enunciate their words and don’t yell at us. I usually ask people to face me when they talk but with masks that doesn’t always work. Remember don’t give up on hearing! With hearing loss there is a higher incidence of depression, earlier onset of dementia and increased loneliness and isolation.
- Remember to laugh. Work at seeing the humour in the world.
- Journal. There are many ways to do this; write your feelings to your diary, or write out how you feeling to our always caring God, draw, paint, use poetry anything that gets your feelings out is using journaling correctly.

I am Karen Cooper and am the counsellor at St. David’s Harmony Centre. I am here if you need me. I work 3 Fridays a month and one Saturday a month. If needed I am willing to add Wednesdays. You can contact me through text or e-mail or by speaking with Pastor Lori. My number is 705-928-2745 and my email is [karen.cooper55@me.com](mailto:karen.cooper55@me.com)