

How Anxious Am I: Internal or External Reasons?

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Are you feeling overwhelmed by the deluge of incoming texts and information from social media, emails and news everywhere? Even switching off notifications on your phones do not help unless you exit the chat and leave the group. But what seems easy to do is also very difficult because there are good reasons to be in the chat group or social media platform in the first place. As updates on Covid-19 mounts, the information we need and do not need becomes blurred and we feel out of control.

Pause for a moment and ask yourself how affected are you with all the news you are receiving about Covid-19? On a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being very worried and anxious, how would you honestly rate the level of worry and anxiety that you are feeling? Do take some time to do that now.

Next, ask yourself what might be some of the reasons for your rating? Are they rational? Are they real? Are they really happening to you right now? What would help you bring the level down to a rating below 5?

External sources such as news coming from WhatsApp texts, Facebook posts and other forms of media impact you negatively as much as you allow them to. Ask yourself if what you are reading is beneficial to you? If so, in what ways? If not, assess if what you are reading is in fact making you feel scared, fearful, troubled and thinking negatively? Tune in to your heart, thoughts and body sensations and take note of what is being surfaced. Take some time to do that now. This simple exercise of checking-in on how you are feeling, consciously evaluating and bringing down the level of intensity is one small way you can care for your own emotional and psychological health.

You might like to note that one piece of news rarely impacts you in a big way. But what is important to note is the principle of the tipping point, which is like the swinging water bucket that collects drips of water until its tipping point and pours forth with an impact of a roaring waterfall. Similarly, negative emotions (fears, worries, anxieties) accumulates and can lunge at you unaware in a big way. You want to prevent that from happening.

Another phrase that comes to mind is *"the last straw that breaks the camel's back"*. While camels are meant to carry heavy load, the last straw upon an already heavy load can actually cause the camel to go under. With that analogy in mind, what we can do is to be mindful and not to allow each negative thought, worry, fear or anxiety to be the only source of our emotional bucket. They may be real in us but as the saying goes *"our imaginations can be our worst fears"*. Instead, let us fill it with peace, happiness, gratitude, hope and all positive emotions. Do read the other articles in this series for practical tips and biblical encouragement.

Internally we all have different capacities. Machines have warning signals that alert us when they are overheated. Our bodies also have similar signs which we can be mindful of. A headache, a backache, faster breathing or chest pains, not due to overwork or known medical reasons, can be some subtle signs. If we have had a bad past experience, a history of poor health or other predisposing factors (example, an anxious personality), we may find ourselves more sensitive to

worry and be easily triggered. All the more we need to be mindful of our inner thoughts and feelings.

If you are already experiencing a health situation right now, and find it difficult to manage, please consider getting and receiving some help. Overthinking and feeling overwhelmed by worrying thoughts may be an indication that your emotional capacity is being stressed. Please do seek out help with a mental health professional such as a counsellor, a psychologist or a psychiatrist if your symptoms become continue to persist and to be intense.