

# A lesson in leaders

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The G20 comprises the world's most powerful economies – 19 countries and the European Union. It was founded in 1999, when it became obvious that the leading industrial nations of the G8 needed to be supplemented by the growing emerging economies, particularly by rising Asia.

G20 territories account for 90 percent of the world's GDP and 66 percent of its population. The group has only three majority Muslim members – Indonesia, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom is the only Arab member, and has assumed the group's rotating presidency this year for the first time.

The G20 was the vital framework coordinating a global response to the 2008-09 financial crisis. The new global crisis is the coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19.

As former US Federal Reserve chief Ben Bernanke has pointed out, a natural disaster such as an earthquake is limited in terms of

geography and time frame, which allows other parts of the world to come to the rescue. COVID-19, however, affects the whole world simultaneously, with no predictable timeframe. In other words, this is a global crisis necessitating global solutions. The G20 is one of the most global economic frameworks, and therefore ideally placed to co-ordinate efforts to address economic hardship inflicted by the pandemic.

Last week it proved its leadership, with a heads of government summit via video conference, hosted by King Salman of Saudi Arabia. He wasted no time driving home to global leaders that the world is seeking leadership, help and compassion from the G20: "This human crisis requires a global response. The world counts on us to come together and cooperate in order to face this challenge. Despite the importance of any country's individual responses, it is our duty to strengthen cooperation and coordination in all aspects of the adopted economic policies."

It was the group's "responsibility to extend a helping hand to de-



Saudi Arabia's King Salman chairs a video conference of world leaders from the Group of 20 and other international bodies and organizations, from his Arabia, March 26, 2020.

# Coping with the coronavirus pandemic for people

JOHN SHARP

These days, we all have to accept the anxiety inherent in living in the time of the coronavirus pandemic and COVID-19. If there was a way to dispel all anxious feelings, I'd tell you, but there isn't. The one exception might be someone who could summon such a degree of denial that they carry on as if everything was normal. And that, as I'm sure you can see, would prove to be very, very unwise.

Anxiety helps us prepare to respond in a more adaptive and healthy way. Some people find it possible to tolerate some degree of discomfort and can manage their anxiety in a healthy manner. Often that's because some people have done well under this kind of challenge already, albeit in very different contexts. Life has a way of requiring this. Yet other people – particularly people who have anxiety disorders – may understandably be having a great deal of trouble coping.

**How can I cope with the coronavirus outbreak if I have a pre-existing anxiety disorder?**

Anxiety disorders take many forms and affect many people. So, what happens now if you're someone who has suffered way too much already with a pre-existing anxiety disorder? For example, perhaps you have been, or could be, diagnosed with panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD), or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Hopefully, you may find that the tips below will help you cope more successfully with what we are all facing together in these unprecedented times.

**Seek support from a mental health professional**

Talking to a mental health professional can bolster your ability to address present concerns, and help you clarify where your feelings are coming from, as explained below. When you're feeling extra worried or overwhelmed, it could be that some of your feelings are from the present challenge and some are from challenges you have faced in the past.

Many psychotherapists and health plans are offering telehealth visits during this time. Ask your therapist or insurance plan if this is an option. More therapists than ever before are moving their practices online. If you search for therapists in your area, their websites may tell you whether they participate in telehealth. Additionally, some national telehealth apps offer therapy via video or audio chat.

**Work toward separating out where your feelings are coming from**

Doing this work can allow you to take a breath and divvy up the different emotional contributions that feed how you're feeling.

- Try saying this, for example: "Of course, I'm more



concerned than (my roommate/my friend/my family), because I'm practiced at feeling anxious or helpless."

- The next step is to recognize that the percentage of feelings that stem from the past do not have to govern how

you necessarily feel in the present. Try saying this out loud: "Well that was then, this is now." A simple state-

- Gently