



LOPEZ ISLAND  
HOSPICE  
& HOME  
SUPPORT

# INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Summer 2020

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Lopez Island  
Hospice & Home Support  
is a 501(c)(3) non-profit  
volunteer organization.  
All services are free.

## Ways to Support Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support

- Donate on our website via Paypal
- Make your Amazon purchases at smile.amazon.com. .5% of the purchase price goes to LIHHS.
- Write us a check – we've included an envelope for your convenience.
- Credit card.

Many thanks for your  
continued generosity.

## Anxiety in the Time of Coronavirus

by Elizabeth Landrum, Ph.D.

*“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle” —Philo of Alexandria*

Anxiety is a natural response to a world-wide pandemic. Whether it's about your health, loved ones, plans, going to work, not going to work, world-wide tragedies, politics, finances, being alone, not being alone, old normal or new normal, stress and worry are endemic to our time. Even when we are not consciously thinking about what is happening, anxiety shows up on an unconscious level (notice your dreams?), and the stress lives in our bodies. We now know that repeated or ongoing stressful situations are even more damaging to health than one large single-event trauma. While anxiety manifests in a variety of forms, it can lead any of us to live in a way that feels out of line with what we value most.

Anxiety is adaptive to a point, motivating us to act when faced with danger, but it can become overwhelming. Our natural tendencies are to fight, feed or numb it, rather than sitting with it, curiously investigating it, so that we might respond wisely, rather than reacting blindly out of our discomfort. At a time when there is so much we can't control, and feelings of powerlessness pervade, we can still remind ourselves of what we can control, then take charge of making healthy, humanizing choices. One such choice is to learn to respect our fears, recognizing that they come and go, letting them pass through, while not allowing them to overtake us.

This time of heightened anxiety may be particularly difficult for those who normally live with acute or generalized anxiety. Merely stopping to focus on breath and to ground yourself in the present moment can end a negative spiral, allowing your rational brain to reset. Regularly practicing any technique for relaxation or meditation can ease stress build-up. One proven technique for calming body and mind is the simple one of slowing the rhythm of breath while noticing the release of tension. Formal training and guidance aren't as necessary as awareness and practice.

Feeling safe in the present moment is not easy, but the present may be more palatable than the futures we can conjure in our minds. Still, as planners, we want to know what lies ahead. Humans are not wired well for living with continual conspicuous uncertainty. Though uncertainty is life's ongoing undercurrent, relaxing into the unknowns of this period is one of our greatest challenges. Sometimes in hopes of forecasting a future, we bombard ourselves with “the news,” even though we may suffer more from the con-

stancy of disturbing reports. We could be better served by taking news holidays, stepping away from daily incidents to examine the larger picture of the principles that guide us, or to read/hear something that inspires. Helping others is another way to re-focus, find the best of ourselves, and rediscover what matters.

Isolation and loneliness can exacerbate distress, so it's important to find safe ways to connect. Though we naturally seek camaraderie and validation from others who share our fears, there is risk in fueling our various fires. Anger can arise out of fear, and it, too, can be channeled in destructive or constructive ways. This unique time could be an invitation to gentle down, to reach for compassion, empathy and kindness — qualities that may help us remember that we are all “fighting a great battle” as we navigate through our assorted fears and fogs.

Liminal times are threshold times when we are losing sight of the world we've been living in and can't yet make out where we will land. Though fraught with disquiet and time-warped disorientation, it is a rich period when we are humbled, yet receptive and creative. As Richard Rohr said, “Calling so-called normalcy into creative question, it invites us to discover and live from broader perspectives and with much deeper seeing.”

## JINGLE BELL DINNER

For eleven years, Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support has hosted the Jingle Bell Dinner – a festive evening of art, music, wonderful food, and community. Each year, we are humbled by the outpouring of support from sponsors, table captains, auction donors, ticket holders, and volunteers. It is a highlight of the year for the LIHHS Board and staff and for many in the community. This year, in light of the pandemic, we are working on a new plan that, while not in-person, will continue to bring community together in a fun, festive way. Please save the date: Saturday, November 28 (same date as the traditional Jingle Bell Dinner) and join us for something a little different but still with a jingle!