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## News-Feed Anxiety

What to do when the big picture makes you feel small

By: Keira Lusby  
Triad EAP



Anxiety is a common topic for *EAP Insights*. Affecting over 40 million adults in the United States over the age of 18, it is safe to say most of us will experience anxiety at one point in our lives. When we talk about managing stress and anxiety, we often refer to it in relation to our inter-personal lives; pressure from a new job, nerves about socializing, stretching ourselves too thin, the list goes on. But what about the anxiety that happens when you turn on the television to find news of another global tragedy or injustice? This type of “big picture” anxiety is becoming more prevalent as our world becomes more and more connected. Just recently, news of the mass shooting at the grocery store in Boulder affected me very deeply for days to the point of struggling to focus at work. I didn’t experience the event firsthand, but I still felt shock, fear, and anger.

As another example, it has been over a year since the Covid-19 Pandemic began and as vaccination numbers rise and people turn to the public, it feels like things are slowly going back to normal. It’s a moment we’ve all been waiting for, but with an overwhelming amount of new information coming out, there is still an undercurrent of anxiety and uncertainty. In fact, a survey from the American Psychological Association

discovered 49% of adults are nervous about returning to in-person interactions. So if you’re experiencing global anxiety, you are not alone.

So, how can we deal with anxiety regarding these big picture situations we have no control over?

Dr. Chloe Carmichael, author of *Nervous Energy: Harness the Power of your Anxiety*, noted that now more than ever her clients are seeking help to manage stress from global events. “It takes a lot of courage to be vulnerable and share that current events are making you feel anxious, angry or confused,” she says, “[and] recognizing this also empowers you to take healthy, appropriate action.” In order to help us combat stress caused by global events, Dr. Chloe created the C.A.R.E. System, a four-step intervention to help guide us through difficult world events.

**Consider:** Dr. Chloe’s first step is to allow yourself to consider the situation and how it makes you feel. Oftentimes, we are quick to deny or avoid our feelings, especially when global anxiety can leave us feeling powerless. It is important to keep in mind denying your feelings will not make them go away. Take a step back and examine your feelings honestly and see where it leads you. Frequently, our emotional response to a situation

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Triad is bound by strict privacy standards. The only information shared with your employer is statistical and demographic data—no identifying details are given.

## Provider Search

Visit [www.triadeap.com](http://www.triadeap.com)  
 Selecting a counselor is a personal decision. Explore our network of over 400 licensed counselors currently taking appointments. When you find a counselor who you'd like to work with call Triad at (877) 679-1100 Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. so an authorization can be sent on your behalf.

## Am I ready to be busy again?

Preparing for life after COVID-19

By: Kenra Haftel  
 Triad EAP

For more than a year the pandemic has thrown us all for loops. It has been like riding a roller coaster. There were ups and downs. Stops and starts. Changes were being thrown at us from every direction. The release of the vaccine has settled the ride down but we are once again preparing for major shifts and changes in our daily routines. Some are headed back to the office. Events and social gatherings are re-turning. New guidelines are confusing. When and where do I have to wear a mask? Is the vaccine safe? But the question that has been on my mind a lot is, "Am I ready to be busy again?"

I've always considered myself an extrovert who thrived when busy. I was the quintessential "yes" girl. Yes, I can volunteer for that committee. Yes, I can take on more hours. Yes, I'll attend that event. Yes, I can drive my overly committed children to practice after practice. Yet, to my surprise, I was okay with life slowing down at the onset of the pandemic. I discovered a sense of peace living in a more calm, less busy world. I like being at home. I enjoy spending more quality time with my family. And, I am not alone. A survey from Healthline Media found that 48% of us enjoy some aspects of social distancing. Author David Hollis shared a quote in 2020 that is worth revisiting. *"In the rush to return to normal, use this time to consider*

*which parts of normal are worth rushing back to."*

What are some things we can do to set boundaries so that as we return to "normal" we don't lose sight of what is important to us? We need to let go of the notion that by saying "no" we are uncaring or selfish. So, let's explore some tips found on [psychcentral.com](https://www.psychcentral.com) on how to say "no."

**Keep your response simple.** If you want to say no, be firm and direct. Use

phrases such as "Thanks for coming to me but I'm afraid it's not convenient right now" or "I'm sorry but I can't help this evening." Don't over-apologize.

**Buy yourself some time.** Interrupt the 'yes' cycle, using phrases like "I'll get back to you," then consider your options. Having thought it through at your leisure, you'll be able to say no with greater confidence.

**Consider a compromise.** Only

do so if you want to agree with the request, but have limited time or ability to do so. Suggest ways forward to suit both of you. Avoid compromising if you want or need to say no.

**Separate refusal from rejection:** Remember you're turning down a request, not a person. People usually will understand that it is your right to say no, just as it is their right to ask the favor.

**Don't feel guilty for saying no to your children:** They need to hear no from time to time so that they develop a sense of self-control. It is hard to negotiate adult life without this important skill.

**Seek Support:** Use your EAP benefits to meet with a counselor and discover other methods that can help you learn to set boundaries and protect your well-being as we get ready to disembark the roller coaster ride that has been COVID-19.



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points to an underlying theme of anxiety in our lives. For example, if the coronavirus making you anxious, perhaps that anxiety is pointing to larger underlying issues about loss of control or uncertainty. "Feelings are actually important information," says Dr. Chloe, "and we don't want to miss them."

**Act:** After you have an idea of how you're feeling about an event, the next step is to take healthy action. Dr. Chloe reasons "taking action is often helpful because it reduces feelings of helplessness and increases feelings of self-efficiency." This step is crucial to avoid getting "stuck in your head" and instead turning those feelings outward. When I was experiencing big picture anxiety after the mass shooting in Boulder, I decided to make room in my budget to donate to the victim's families. If you require more physical action, consider volunteering somewhere related to the triggering event. The point of this step is to turn feelings of overwhelm and powerlessness into positive action. Ask yourself what action you can take to help empower yourself, personally?

**Reflect:** After you have taken action, take a moment to reflect on how it made you feel. If you volunteered, how does it feel to think about the real people you potentially helped? This step is important for remaining grounded and keeping our lives in perspective. In our hyper-connected world, it can be easy to lose sight of the world in front of us in favor of the world online. "The goal here is not to completely resolve all the pain," says Dr. Chloe, "but instead to help you feel proactive as you confront difficult things." Be honest with yourself. You did not 'fail' the C.A.R.E. System if you still have lingering feelings of anxiety. Consider reaching out to a counselor to help resolve any residual feelings you may be holding on to.

**Ease:** The final step is to ease into something else. After you have honestly considered, reflected, and took action, give yourself permission to move forward with your life. Dr. Chloe highlights the importance of making sure you're at least open to the idea that "after consideration, action, and reflection it may be the right time for you to ease forward with the rest of your life." Remember, you can return to the "consider" phase at any time.

## Triad EAP Counseling FAQ's

**Q: What is EAP counseling?**

A: EAP counseling is short-term, solution-based counseling with the goal of helping you move through issues quickly. For long-term issues, the EAP can be a starting point and if needed you can transition from the free EAP services your health insurance coverage or local resources.

**Q: What are my options if I want to continue counseling after completing my allotted sessions?**

For help beyond the scope of the EAP, we suggested reviewing your health insurance mental health coverage. Call the number on your health insurance card and ask:

- Do I have mental health counseling benefits?
- Is it subject to my deductible?
- What's the co-pay?
- Is there an annual limit of sessions

**Q: What happens if I would like to change counselors?**

A: Selecting a counselor is a very personal decision. Any sessions that have not been used can be re-allocated to a new provider.

**Q: Why should I see a counselor if I'm not mentally ill?**

A: People reach out for counseling for many different reasons. They may seek assistance achieving work-life balance, stress management, parenting support or guidance when working through conflicts. Counselors are neutral professionals who can share a different perspective on your issues.

**Q: Can my counselor prescribe medication?**

A: No, but a counselor may suggest that you receive a medical evaluation by a psychiatrist who can determine what medications may be helpful in managing your mental health.

**Q: Who are the counselors in the EAP network?**

A: Our counselors are highly qualified, credentialed professionals with a minimum of a master's level degree in psychology, counseling and/or social work.