

Christian Psychologist: How to Lessen Stress When COVID-19 Throws Off Your Routine

Dr. Shannon Crawford shares insight into neuroscience as it relates to COVID-19. Many people's routines are thrown off, and they're experiencing heightened anxiety. The first step in all of this is to remove the feeling of shame.

"I think first, it's really [about] understanding what's going on," Crawford says. "Because I work with a lot of psychologists; I work with a lot of people who are expecting themselves to continue to perform at the same level. And they're placing that false expectation and then shaming themselves when they're not measuring up to what they're accustomed to. And so what do we do about that?"

"Well, first, I want to normalize it. ... We don't want to treat ourselves like a bicycle, that I'm just pedaling harder and I'm powering myself more and then burning ourselves out and then causing larger ripple effects, with burnout and depression and anxiety symptoms later. If we cycle back and move into the issue at hand, now we can steward a little bit more strategically and softly so that we can go in the long haul."

Rather than working harder when stressed, which is actually counterproductive, we need to focus our thoughts on connection to God and people, Crawford says on *The Linda Fields Show* on the Charisma Podcast Network. Scientifically speaking, the stress people are encountering amid the COVID-19 pandemic can lead to a fight-or-flight response that can be difficult to control.

“If I can picture putting my head into God’s chest and crying and saying, ‘I’m scared, I’m overwhelmed. I don’t know how to do this,’ and I’m visualizing a hug, you’re releasing the same chemicals as if you’re actually being hugged,” Crawford says. “And that is one way to physiologically calm down that sympathetic nervous system.”

For more tips on maintaining good mental health, listen to the entire podcast titled *Aligning your Body, Soul and Spirit to Lower Stress in our COVID-19 Reality*.