

#LIFEHACKS

How to deal with news anxiety?

The world has been in unrest for a minute and a half now. It is normal to stay up-to-date with the latest updates. However, we must also allow ourselves to take a step back when the news starts to feel overwhelming, and begins to take a toll on our mental health.

So, how can we alter our relationship with the news?

Avoid dwelling on things we can't change

No matter how much we want, some things are beyond our control to fix. Stay informed and understand the situation instead of overanalysing it. Instead of going through the entirety of a news report, read the news ticker and stay updated with the essential facts you need in order to plan your day.

Fix your 'worry time'

In difficult times, news anxiety can be



at its peak. Hence, we should limit our media consumption. Instead of constantly refreshing our pages for the next update, we should fix a time for ourselves to keep up with the news. For instance, you can go through the news in the morning for 20 minutes and let that be your 'worry time' instead of pondering over it your whole day. The news will come up regardless of whether we choose to see it or not. So,

if engaging with the headlines is causing harm to your mental health, you can always choose to tune out, or at least limit how much news you are absorbing.

Make a difference on issues we care about

We should advocate for what's right by being involved in charity and community

work to help those we can access. It is natural to feel guilty about not doing enough for your community. You can research and share factual information that will be helpful to others. Personal stories may trigger anyone with news anxiety, hence, shifting your focus to statistics can be a more practical way of doing your part.

Stay active and socially disconnected

Feeding our brains 10 different international and national stories before we fully open our eyes can lead to potential physical and mental health problems or unhealthy habits,

which include 'doom-scrolling,' feeling agitated, and having trouble with concentration, to name a few. When the information starts flooding, and you feel overstimulated, kindly log out or deactivate your socials. Take a break from the outside world and focus on destressing. The easiest way to release stress is to exercise. Go for a walk, cook a hot meal, or simply talk to a family member. Diverting your mind to something within your control will help you relax.

**WORRY
LESS**

**By Tasnim Kabir
Photo: Collected**

How to identify fake news

Fake news existed even before the internet, but with the World Wide Web and social media, the problem has been elevated to a whole different level. Add to that the protests and volatility Bangladesh — and many other places in the world — have been witnessing, what you have is a breeding ground for fake news.

But the term itself is problematic: too broad, too vague, and overused and rotted by politicians worldwide! Words such as "misinformation" and "disinformation" and various theories and concepts have attempted to make better sense of it.

So, how do you go about spotting fake news?

Rely on the most reliable sources

If you can master just this, you can often



easily steer away from fake news. When you come across a news story, simply check whether it is from a trusted news outlet. Reputed news organisations have a solid fact-checking process and gatekeeping. It is therefore less likely for a reputed brand to publish major inaccuracies, let alone publish totally fabricated or downright misleading content.

Beware of imposters

Getting into murky waters now, there is the concept of imposter content, imposter site, imposter account etc., where the source

tries to mimic a trustworthy brand. So, for fake news, it can be about pretending to be a reputed news organisation which many people are familiar with, let's say by adopting a similar name or URL.

Don't drink old wine in a new bottle

Continuing with the example, you can come across videos and reels with false or misleading captions. A video, reel, and image may be "real", but it does not necessarily mean that the caption is too. In other words, any content is as real as the caption itself.

You may come across a reel of a harrowing incident or a mob attack which happened a few years ago but with a caption framing it as something recent.

A good way to deal with it is to be politically aware and use your evaluation before sharing.

Tackle the threat of deep fakes

Artificial Intelligence can be scary! With technological tools, fake images/videos/audio clips can feature people doing things they never did or saying things they never said.

However, while deep fakes are getting better day by day, there can be glitches or inconsistencies. Does the number of fingers of the person add up? Does the skin look too smooth? Do the lip movements seem natural and sync with the voice? And so on.

There are deep fake detectors you can find online, but tell-tale signs and your judgment on the believability of the content can take you a long way, along with crosschecking from a few trusted brands.

We should improve our media literacy in the long run. For now, when in doubt, one should at least consider how believable the story is, crosscheck, and just apply common sense with a bit of sense of humour as well!

**By M H Haider
Photo: Collected**