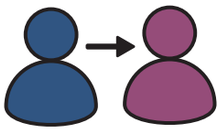
COVID-19 AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

While we are familiar with viruses like the common cold and the flu, the coronavirus (COVID-19) is new and presents a situation that none of us could have imagined a few short months ago. The fact that it is extremely contagious has resulted in business closures, social distancing, and quarantine measures which have disruptived our daily lives. It is more important now than ever to pay attention to mental health during this time of isolation and uncertainty.

YOUR CONCERNS ARE VALID

There are many reasons that you might be concerned or worried about COVID-19. Some of the most common are:

Getting sick



Passing the virus onto others, especially those that are high-risk

Adjusting to a new reality for an uncertain amount of time

Taking care of and supporting your family

Concern about the health of your friends and family

Financial stress

Not being able connect with friends and family the way you're used to

Shortages of certain common supplies

REALIZE WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

One of the most frustrating things about COVID-19 is that so much about the virus and the limitations on where you can go are out of your control. However, there are things that you can control, and focusing on those things can provide you with some comfort. Some of the things you can control include:

YOUR MIND AND BODY

- Keep a healthy diet
- Exercise at home
- Get enough sleep
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol excessively
- Take care of your mental health
- Maintain self-care and personal hygiene

YOUR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

- Your house, your bedroom, your closet, your kitchen – now is the time to clean and get organized
- Make responsible choices about when to leave the house and only go out if necessary
- Limit the number of people you come into contact with
- Work from home if you are able to

WHAT YOU CONSUME

- Don't overdo your news and information intake
- Get your information from reliable sources like the CDC or WHO
- Watch TV, movies, and videos that make you feel good

HOW YOU PREPARE

- Keep 2-4 weeks of food on hand
- Avoid overstocking on supplies that are in high demand so other people can have enough of the essentials too
- If you take medication, get refills and keep a month's supply at home if possible

HOW YOU PROTECT YOURSELF

- Regularly wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoid greeting people by shaking hands, kissing or hugging
- Keep 6 feet of distance between you and anyone who is coughing or sneezing

HOW YOU PROTECT OTHERS

- Stay home if you are sick aside from getting medical care
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces

SIGNS OF ANXIETY

It is normal to be worried and stressed during times of crisis. While worry is a part of anxiety, people with anxiety tend to experience more exaggerated feelings of worry and tension. Some common symptoms include:

- Uncontrollable worry or dread
- Stomach and digestion problems
- Trouble with concentration, memory, or thinking clearly
- Increased heart rate
- Changes in energy and difficulty sleeping
- Irritability and/or restlessness

In extreme cases of anxiety, people may experience a panic attack. Panic attacks are often mistaken for heart attacks at first, but usually go away when people are able to talk to someone else to calm their fears and practice deep breathing.

MANAGING ANXIETY

There are small things that everyone can do while practicing social distancing or self-quarantine to help reduce the amount of anxiety they are experiencing.

- Ask someone to be your support buddy. Call, text, or video chat as needed.
- Exercise at home
- Use resources like online support groups or the Crisis Text Line (Text MHA to 741741)
- Set boundaries with your phone
- Use a mindfulness or meditation app
- Set a timer for every hour to get up and stretch or take a walk
- Create a new routine
- Take 10 deep breaths when you feel stressed

WHEN ANXIETY WON'T LET UP

If you're taking steps to manage worry and anxiety during the COVID-19 crisis but they don't seem to be helping, there are additional resources you can take advantage of.

Mental Health Screening

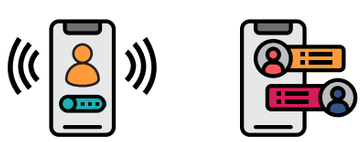
If you feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit mhascreening.org to check your symptoms.

It's free, private, and anonymous. Once you have your results, MHA will give you information and resources to help you start to feel better.

Crisis Hotlines and Textlines

If you experiencing emotional distress related to the COVID-19 pandemic, crisis counselors are available 24/7, 365 days a year.

Call 1-800-985-5990
or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746.



If you are in crisis or or thinking about suicide, get connected to a local crisis center and get in touch with someone immediately.

Call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK)
or text "MHA" to 741741.

Find more information and resources about COVID-19 and mental health at mhanational.org/covid19.

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