

COVID-19: Psychosocial Care and Well Being



The outbreak of COVID-19 can be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and can cause strong emotions. The fear of being out of control and unable to tolerate uncertainty are common characteristics of many anxiety disorders. Current circumstances could make it worse for people with existing mental health issues. While we keep practising essential preventive measures such as social distancing, hand washing, and coughing/sneezing etiquettes, it is also important to adjust emotionally in way that is healthy to both mind and body.

Here are a few things that are suggested to help with mental health during these times:

- Take time to acknowledge your own, normal feelings of fear and helplessness
- Minimize consuming news that causes you to feel anxious or distressed; seek information only from trusted sources such as the WHO website or authorised Govt. agencies in order to help you distinguish facts from rumours; seek information updates only at specific times during the day
- Protect yourself and be supportive to others. Assisting others in their time of need can benefit the person receiving support as well as the helper. For example, check-in by phone on neighbours or people in your community who may need some extra assistance. Working together as one community can help to create solidarity in addressing Covid-19 together
- Try and use helpful coping strategies such as ensuring enough rest and respite during work or between shifts, eat sufficient and healthy food, engage in physical activity, and stay in contact with family and friends
- Know how to provide support to, for people who are affected with COVID-19 and know how to link them with available resources. This is especially important for those who require mental health and psychosocial support. The stigma associated with mental health problems may cause reluctance to seek support for both COVID-19 and mental health conditions
- Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated, bedwetting etc. Respond to your child's reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns and give them extra time and attention. Remember to listen to your children, speak kindly and reassure them. If possible, make opportunities for the child to play and relax
- Help children find positive ways to express feelings such as fear and sadness. Every child has their own way to express emotions. Sometimes engaging in a creative activity, such as playing, and drawing can facilitate this process. Children feel

relieved if they can express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment

- Maintain familiar routines in daily life as much as possible or create new routines in a new environment, including regular exercising, cleaning, daily chores, singing, painting or other activities. Provide engaging age appropriate activities for children, including activities for their learning. As much as possible, encourage children to continue to play and socialize with others, even if only within the family.
- Older adults, especially in isolation and those with cognitive decline/dementia, may become more anxious, angry, stressed, agitated, and withdrawn during the outbreak/while in quarantine. Provide practical and emotional support through informal networks (families) and health professionals
- Share simple facts about what is going on and give clear information about how to reduce risk of infection in words older people with/without cognitive impairment can understand. Repeat the information whenever necessary. Instructions need to be communicated in a clear, concise, respectful and patient way. It may also be helpful for information to be displayed in writing or pictures. Engage their family and other support networks in providing information and helping them practice prevention measures
- For health workers and medical professionals, feeling under pressure is a likely experience for you and many of your colleagues. It is quite normal to be feeling this way in the current situation. Stress and the feelings associated with it are by no means a reflection that you cannot do your job or that you are weak. Managing your mental health and psychosocial wellbeing during this time is as important as managing your physical health
- To manage urgent mental health and neurological complaints (e.g. delirium, psychosis, severe anxiety or depression), please consult trained medical/psychological professionals

References

- <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf>
- https://www.communityengagementhub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/03/MHPSS-during-disease-outbreak_GEN_ENG_final.pdf
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-51873799>