

# MENTAL HEALTH AND COPING DURING COVID-19



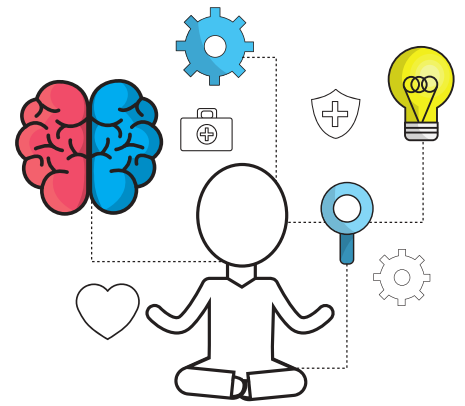
The outbreak of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) may be stressful for people and communities. It is not unusual to feel anxiety about COVID-19 and you will probably worry about the potential impact on yourself and your family. Some distress is common in uncertain situations like this outbreak, and it may cause strong emotions in both adults and children.

## EVERYONE REACTS DIFFERENTLY TO STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

The emotional impact of an unusual or urgent situation depends on the person's characteristics and experiences, their social and economic circumstances, and the availability of local resources. It is normal to feel sad, distressed, worried, confused, scared or angry when experiencing a situation such as COVID-19. However, signs of severe emotional distress, such as persistent insomnia, interpersonal problems, disabling fear, increased use of alcohol or drugs, indicate you should reach out for help.

# REACTIONS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC CAN INCLUDE:

- Fear and worry about your own health status and that of your loved ones who may have been exposed to COVID-19
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or recreational drugs
- Feelings of helplessness, boredom, loneliness and depression due to being isolated
- Common symptoms of other health problems (e.g., a cough) can be mistaken for COVID-19 and lead to fear of being infected
- Some people may become more distressed if they see repeated images or hear repeated reports about the outbreak in the media.



Some of these fears and reactions spring from realistic understanding of the dangers, but many reactions and behaviours are also fed by rumours and misinformation.

Some people may have positive experiences, such as pride in their contribution and finding ways of coping and resilience. Community members often show great altruism and cooperation, and people may experience great satisfaction from helping others.

# THINGS YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY:

- Stay informed, but avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19. Periodically check the news and recommendations from trusted sites such as the local health authorities. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis in a constant stream.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid excessive alcohol and recreational drugs.
- Accept that there may be disappointment or frustration at changing plans such as cancelled or postponed vacations, or family visits. Acknowledge and accept strong emotions.
- Try as much as possible to stick to a daily routine, or create new ones to get through this period. If possible, make opportunities for children to play and relax
- Connect with others in your social networks virtually through e-mail, phone calls or social media. Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships.
- Draw on skills that you have used in the past during difficult times to manage your emotions during this outbreak. Relaxation techniques may work for some people, others may find engaging in enjoyable hobbies or activities is effective.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking.
- Focus on the positive aspect of your life and things you can control. For situations that are beyond your control, you may want to shift your emotional response by distracting yourself with another task (cooking, cleaning), going for a walk, taking a bath, talking to a friend on the phone or meditating.
- Stay prepared and apply social distancing and preventive measures such as frequent hand washing and cough etiquette. If you are sick, stay home and reach out to medical as appropriate to your situation.



# MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL

During times of increased stress, it is common to enter the Reacting Zone of the Mental Health Continuum. While this is an adaptive response, and most individuals will use their own positive coping strategies to manage the increased demands, it is important to maintain an ongoing awareness of your health and well-being during this time.

HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
Normal mood fluctuations Calm & takes things in stride	Irritable/Impatient Nervous Sadness/Overwhelmed	Anger Anxiety Pervasively sad/Hopeless	Angry outbursts/aggression Excessive anxiety/panic attacks Depressed/Suicidal thoughts
Good sense of humour Performing well In control mentally	Displaced sarcasm Procrastination Forgetfulness	Negative attitude Poor performance/Workaholic Poor concentration/decisions	Overt insubordination Can't perform duties, control behaviour or concentrate
Normal sleep patterns Few sleep difficulties	Trouble sleeping Intrusive thoughts Nightmares	Restless disturbed sleep Recurrent images/nightmares	Can't fall asleep or stay asleep Sleeping too much or too little
Physically well Good energy level	Muscle tension Headaches Low energy	Increased aches and pains Increased fatigue	Physical illnesses Constant fatigue
Physically and socially active	Decreased activity/socializing	Avoidance Withdrawal	Not going out or answering phone
No/limited alcohol use/ gambling	Regular but controlled alcohol use/gambling	Increased alcohol use/ gambling – hard to control	Alcohol or gambling addiction Other addictions

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