



PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1. How does Covid-19 affect my mental health?

- Fear of the virus is associated with the experience of intense distress.
- Prolonged distress can lead to anxiety disorders and depression.
- Physical isolation of individuals, families or communities exposed to Covid-19 is a further risk for psychosocial problems.
- Social problems may emerge such as breakdown of community support systems and stigma against the vulnerable and the ill.
- There is likely to be a drastic decline of income generation within communities due to travel and work restrictions, loss of family and community members and the collapse of businesses
- Persons with pre-existing mental conditions may relapse and may not find adequate care including medication.

NB: No current scientific evidence that the Corona virus infects the brain.

2. How can I tell that my mental health is getting affected during this time?



Lack of sleep



Feeling sad all the time or getting angry easily



Inability to relax



Hearing voices of people who are not present



Loss of appetite



Increased use of alcohol & other drugs



Lack of energy



Thinking about death most of the time



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3. **What should I do to remain mentally healthy during the Covid-19 pandemic?**

- Establish and maintain a daily routine with periods of work and periods of rest
- Avoid consumption of alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism.
- Minimize watching , reading or listening to news that causes you anxiety.
- Choose a reliable source of update and engage with it at a chosen time of the day.
- Protect yourself and be supportive to others. Supporting others is beneficial for mental health.
- Share positive stories of persons who have recovered from Covid-19.
- Appreciate the role of health care workers during the pandemic.
- Practice sleep hygiene. Go to bed and wake up at constant times and sleep for 7-8 hours per night.
- Practice physical distancing but stay connected with family and friends via internet and phone contact.
- Practice good self-care through adequate rest, nutritious diet, soothing activities, regular exercise and usual hobbies within limits of physical distancing.
- If the symptoms persist seek the advice of a healthcare worker in a hospital.
- This advice also applies to the elderly. In addition the elderly should continue taking any current medication and seek professional advice early in case they develop any of the symptoms in no. 2.



4. **How can we reduce stigma against persons suffering from Covid-19 and their caregivers?**

- Do not attach Covid-19 to tribe, political grouping, age, race or socio-economic status.
- People affected by Covid-19 have not done anything wrong and deserve our support and kindness.
- Do not refer to persons diagnosed with Covid-19 as "covid-19 cases" or covid-19 victims" or covid-19 families". Instead they are people who are being treated for Covid-19 or people who are recovering from covid-19.
- Be ready to welcome persons who have recovered from Covid-19 back into the community without discrimination.



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5. How can children be assisted to cope at this time?

- Reassurance and comfort from adults.
- Simplification of key messages including safety measures.
- Respond to their questions in a language they understand.
- Continuity with school work using available channels such as radio and internet.
- Allow children to play indoors.
- Set and adhere to routines and schedules.
- Continue to show them love and affection.

6. Advice for the bereaved



Following death of a loved one will experience pain and sadness as part of grief



Attending support groups, seeing a trusted mentor or spiritual leader, or seeking support from a therapist can help when one is experiencing extended sadness and guilt following loss of a loved one. These contacts can be through online platforms when it is not possible to have in-person meetings

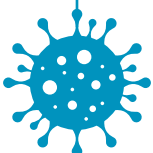


Persons who show abnormal behavior including suicidal thoughts should seek specialist care in a hospital

7. Advice for persons with existing mental illness



- If you are taking medication for a mental health condition, continue taking medication.
- Call your usual provider in advance to advise you on arrangements for continuing care and clinics. Most providers have organized for tele-consultations or alternative care during this time
- In case of a crisis, call or have a loved one call the emergency services of your nearest hospital to make arrangements for care when you get there
- it is normal to feel anxious or fearful during a pandemic. taking precautions as advised by health authorities, and adhering to your own routine tending to your daily needs helps to reduce the feelings of anxiety and uncertainty.
- The pandemic will end. you need to plan for the period after the pandemic as well.



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