

## **Mental Health and Coping Strategies During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

As the COVID-19 continues to spread and impact all walks of life the situation can cause a high level of anxiety, depression and concern. As fear levels rise, an individual's mental health may suffer. While anyone may experience anxiety and increased stress, individuals with a pre-existing mental health condition are more likely to see these symptoms increase. Based on that concern here are tips and guidance for managing mental health symptoms during this time.

The following information is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and can also be found on the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html>

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- People who have preexisting mental health conditions including problems with substance use
- Children
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders

### **Reactions during an infectious disease outbreak 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 other drugs

**People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment plans during an emergency and monitor for any new symptoms. Additional information can be found at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website**

### **Things you can do to support yourself:**

- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19.
- 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 alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do some other activities you enjoy to return to your normal life.
- Connect with others. Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking.

## Mental Health and Coping Strategies During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

### What are quarantine and social distancing?

- [Quarantine](#) separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.
- **Social distancing** means remaining out of places where people meet or gather, avoiding local public transportation (e.g., bus, subway, taxi, rideshare), and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others.

Sharing accurate information can help calm fears in others and allow you to connect with them.

### For parents:

Children react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

### Not all children respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for in children:

- Excessive crying and irritation
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (e.g., toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

### There are many things you can do to support your child:

- Take time to talk with your child about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and [share facts](#) about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand.
- Reassure your child that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your child’s exposure to media coverage of the event. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Help your child to have a sense of structure. Once it is safe to return to school or child care, help them return to their regular activity.
- Be a role model; take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members and rely on your social support system.

## Mental Health and Coping Strategies During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

### STIGMA

Additionally to the above information there are also concerns developing around stigma. The following information is also from the CDC and can be found in more detail at the following link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/related-stigma.html>

Public health emergencies, such as the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), are stressful times for people and communities. Fear and anxiety about a disease can lead to social *stigma* (1) toward people, places, or things. For example, stigma and discrimination can occur when people associate a disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality, even though not everyone in that population or from that region is specifically at risk for the disease. Stigma can also occur after a person has been released from COVID-19 quarantine even though they are not considered a risk for spreading the virus to others.

Some groups of people who may be experiencing stigma because of COVID-19 include:

- Persons of Asian descent
- People who have traveled
- Emergency responders or healthcare professionals

Stigma hurts everyone by creating fear or anger towards other people.

Stigmatized groups may be subjected to:

- Social avoidance or rejection
- Denials of healthcare, education, housing or employment
- Physical violence.

**Communicators and public health officials can help counter stigma during the COVID-19 response.**

- Maintain privacy and confidentiality of those seeking healthcare and those who may be part of any contact investigation.
- Quickly communicate the risk or lack of risk from associations with products, people, and places.
- Raise awareness about COVID-19 without increasing fear.
- Share accurate information about how the virus spreads.
- Speak out against negative behaviors, including negative statements on social media about groups of people, or exclusion of people who pose no risk from regular activities.
- Be cautious about the images that are shared. Make sure they do not reinforce stereotypes.

## **Mental Health and Coping Strategies During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**

- Engage with stigmatized groups in person and through media channels including news media and social media.
- Thank healthcare workers and responders. People who have traveled to areas where the COVID-19 outbreak is happening to help have performed a valuable service to everyone by helping make sure this disease does not spread further.
- Share the need for social support for people who have returned from China or are worried about friends or relatives in the affected region.

As always we want to be supportive of our members, our providers and our Superior family. Please use these resources to assist in this support.

You can also reference the Centene COVID-19 resource page at:

<https://cnet.centene.com/Pages/COVID-19.aspx>

## Mental Health and Coping Strategies During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

### Additional Resources for Talking to Children about COVID-19

1. World Health Organization: Myth Busters. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>
2. World Health Organization: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: Videos. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/videos>
3. American Red Cross: Recovering Emotionally. <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/recovering-emotionally.html>
4. Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules (AFIRM) : <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/supporting-individuals-autism-through-uncertain-times>
5. The Autism Community in Action. <https://tacanow.org/family-resources/developing-lifeskills-how-to-teach-a-skill/>
6. Teaching Mama: Teaching Handwashing for Kids. <https://teachingmama.org/handwashing-songs-for-kids/Substance%20Abuse%20Mental%20Health%20Services%20Administration:%20Coronavirus.%20https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus>
7. Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration. <https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus>
8. Center for Disease Control: Coping after a disaster. A Ready Wrigley activity book for children age 3-10. [https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readywrigley/documents/RW\\_Coping\\_After\\_a\\_Disaster\\_508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/readywrigley/documents/RW_Coping_After_a_Disaster_508.pdf)
9. National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Parent/ Caregiver guide to Helping Families cope with Coronavirus Disease 2019. <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019-ch>

## Mental Health and Coping Strategies During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

10. National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Taking Care of Yourself 2020  
[https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/taking\\_care\\_of\\_yourself.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/taking_care_of_yourself.pdf)
11. National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Supporting Children/Covid Factsheet 2020.  
<https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/supportingchildren-covid-factsheet.pdf>
12. American Academy of Pediatrics. The Emotional Impact of Disaster on Children and Families. <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Children-and-Disasters/Pages/The-Emotional-Impact-of-Disaster-on-Children-and-Families.aspx>
13. Great list of online resources and support groups  
<https://www.nami.org/getattachment/About-NAMI/NAMI-News/2020/NAMI-Updates-on-the-Coronavirus/COVID-19-Updated-Guide-1.pdf>
14. NAMI has a COVID-19 News update  
<https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/NAMI-News/2020/NAMI-Updates-on-the-Coronavirus>
15. PBS Video discussing the impact of isolation during the outbreak  
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/the-impact-isolation-can-have-on-mental-health-during-the-outbreak>
16. Living with Mental Illness during COVID-19- Preparing for your wellness  
<https://mhanational.org/living-mental-illness-during-covid-19-outbreak-preparing-your-wellness>
17. Being mindful during COVID-19  
<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/taking-care-of-your-mental-health-during-covid19-outbreak>
18. CDC- COVID-19 – Manage Anxiety and Stress  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
19. PBS- Why your mental Health may be suffering in the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Mental Health and Coping Strategies During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/why-your-mental-health-may-be-suffering-in-the-covid-19-pandemic>

20. Time magazine: How to stay physically and mentally healthy during quarantine  
<https://time.com/5804130/covid-19-social-distancing-wellness/>
21. COVID-19 Psychosocial Impact  
<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/covid-19s-psychosocial-impacts/>
22. Hume, K., Waters, V., Sam, A., Steinbrenner, J., Perkins, Y., Dees, B., Tomaszewski, B., Rentschler, L., Szendrey, S., McIntyre, N., White, M., Nowell, S., & Odom, S. (2020). Supporting individuals with autism through uncertain times. Chapel Hill, NC: School of Education and Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from: <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/supporting-individuals-autism-through-uncertain-times>
23. Child Mind Institute. Supporting Kids during the Coronavirus Crisis.  
<https://childmind.org/article/supporting-kids-during-the-covid-19-crisis/>
24. Centene Foster Care: <https://www.centenefostercare.com/locations.html>