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 disrupted 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:

- 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.
- Your concerns are valid.
- Keep a healthy diet.
- Exercise at home.
- Get enough sleep.
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol excessively.
- Maintain self-care and personal hygiene.
- Your body needs rest to fight the virus, so treat yourself kindly.
- 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.
- Minimize the number of people you come into contact with.
- Work from home if you are able to.
- 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.

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:

- 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 in your family to run chores or a quick errand. You might not want to leave your house but you could talk on the phone.
- 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.
- Don’t overdo your news and information intake. Get your information from reliable sources like the CDC or WHO.
- Mental Health Screening

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:

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