

With the recent outbreak of the COVRONAVIRUS (COVID-19), children's normal routines have been dramatically disrupted, causing uncertainty and stress on families. Parents may struggle with talking to their children and need guidance on how to provide the support their children need. Most importantly, children need reassurance by their families that they are safe. Whether they see images on television or hear people talking, children may feel scared that something bad is going to happen. This is best addressed by talking with them about their feelings and providing information about ways to prevent the disease, such as washing their hands and social distancing.

Create a safe and reassuring atmosphere

- When children are aware that something has happened, let them know they can talk to you about their feelings
- Asking them about what they have heard is a good way to start
- Children may be fearful that such things could impact to them or their families. Reassure them that you will keep them as safe as possible

Children need you to tell the truth

- Answer their questions with honesty
- Explain events using words and ideas that they understand
- Don't overwhelm them with details, unless they ask for specific information
- It's OK to let children know that you too are feeling anxious

How can you deal with TV, internet, and other media?

- Monitor younger children's TV and online viewing. Make sure they don't watch shows or visit sites with frightening information
- For older children or adolescents, watching TV or online news should be limited and monitored. Be sure to talk about what they see and hear
- Ask questions like, "What do you think about what is happening? Are you scared? Do you feel anxious or worried?"

Help them cope with their feelings

- If it is hard for your children to talk about their feelings, encourage them to express themselves by drawing pictures and tell stories about their feelings
- Establish a regular routine for meals, schoolwork, and relaxation activities. Children find comfort in what is familiar
- Provide opportunities for them to go outdoors, go for a walk and get some exercise
- Encourage your children to use technology to communicate with family and friends
- Focus on the positive. Point out all the people who help others during an emergency

Look for signs of anxiety or fear

- Loss of appetite, stomachaches, headaches or nightmares
- Constantly talking about scary ideas or feelings
- Increased fighting with friends, parents or siblings
- Fear of leaving parents, or returning to school
- Persistent signs of stress or agitation
- If your child shows these signs for a long period of time, talk with a health care professional



Helpful Resources

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Phone: 1-800-985-5990 (English and Spanish)

SMS: Text TalkWithUs to 66746

SMS (español): "Hablamos" al 66746 TTY: 1-800-846-8517

Website (English and Spanish): <http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Phone: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and Spanish)

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Phone: (English and Spanish): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Website (English and Spanish): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Treatment Locator

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

Website: <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/locator/home>



Sources for Reliable COVID-19 Outbreak-Related Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov>

SAMHSA's National Helpline
<https://www.who.int/en>

Taking Care of Your Self

Anxiety, Social Distancing, and Quarantines during an Infectious Disease Outbreak.

voices
OF SEPTEMBER 11TH

Anxiety

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations, the community is continuously exposed to stressors that the general public may not experience. Therefore, it is important to be aware and honest about your own health status. Be aware of signs of depression or PTSD (intrusive and distressing memories, flashbacks, mood changes etc.) and contact the appropriate health care provider if persistent.

Evaluate Your Risk

Many in the community are a greater risk from COVID 19 as a result of their age and pre-existing conditions. Consult reliable source such CDC and The World Health Organization for accurate information.

Awareness

Know the signs, If you develop a persistent cough, fever or shortness of breath seek medical advice. If you have been in contact with a person known to have COVID-19 seek medical advice especially if you have additional medical vulnerabilities.

Stop the Spread of Germs

Avoid close contact, cover a cough and sneeze with a tissue, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, clean and disinfect surfaces frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and if you are sick, Stay at Home.

Educate Yourself

Seek reliable information sources, check for updates. Learn about the disease.

Connect with Your Support Network during a Quarantine

Embrace technology, phone, email, text, skype and face time – arrange virtual social gatherings to remain connected, not bored or isolated.

Relax and Rejuvenate

Stretch, Read, Breath, Write a Journal, Meditate, Take a Walk. Cook.

Social Distancing

Practice safe distances and interactions.



The outbreak of the CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) has impacted individuals, families and communities around the world. Feelings of uncertainty about the spread of the virus has caused fear, anxiety and social isolation. Similar to the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, information and support is critical to build resilience and promote recovery in communities during this turbulent time.

Voices of September 11th is sharing lessons learned based on our experience providing support services for thousands of families, survivors and responders since 2001.

Create a “new normal” for you and your family

- Establish a daily routine
- Adopt a family plan for social distancing to prevent spreading the disease
- Ensure your family has social interactions
- Be informed about local and national resources
- Know the signs on when you or your family members need to seek medical or mental health professional help
- Rely on reputable sources for news updates and limit over exposure to media reports
- Be prepared to have adequate food supplies and medication on hand

Helpful Tips

- **Establish a social support system.** Stay in close contact with family and friends outside your household, by phone or by using technology to increase interactions and minimize isolation.
- **Use trustworthy sources for information.** During times of crisis, access to accurate information is critical. Rely on reputable organizations for guidance and avoid overexposure to news that can cause stress and anxiety.
- **Identify resources and support in your community.** Identify professionals in your community who can provide mental health support, medical treatment and other services.
- **Take care of yourself.** Establish a daily routine for you and your family. Eat healthy, exercise and get plenty of rest. Limit the use of alcohol, drugs and caffeine.



Common Reactions to Stressful Situations

It is common to experience a range of emotions during stressful situations, such as the COVID-19 outbreak, including fear, anxiety, difficulty paying attention, depression, and disrupted sleep. Although individuals who have a prior history of mental health conditions are especially vulnerable, social isolation and the stressors related to the outbreak can impact anyone. It is important to monitor both the physical and emotional health of you and your family and seek medical and mental health treatment when symptoms arise.

Listed here are some of the most common reactions in the four areas where stress usually shows up. However, you should be alert for ANY unusual stress responses and seek professional help if symptoms persist or impact your daily quality of living.

Common Emotional Reactions

You may feel:

- Anxious or fearful
- Overwhelmed by sadness
- Frustrated by social isolation
- Angry
- Guilty, even when you had no control over the situation
- Too much unreleased energy or no energy at all
- Disconnected, not caring about anything or anyone
- Numb, unable to feel either joy or sadness

“During these uncertain times, it’s important to care for both our physical and mental health needs, and rely on the support of our family and friends to help us stay resilient. Whether near or far, we are all in this together!”

—Mary Fetchet, LCSW



Common Physical Reactions

- Stomachaches, nausea, or diarrhea
- Headaches or other physical pains
- Eating too much or too little
- Sweating or having chills
- Tremors (shaking) or muscle twitches
- Being jumpy or easily startled
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, sleeping too much, or trouble relaxing
- Racing heartbeat
- Changes in sex drive
- Sensitivity to noises or smells

Common Reactions to Stressful Situations

Protect yourself from COVID-19

- Wash your hands regularly
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Avoid sharing personal items
- Clean all surfaces like doorknobs, counters and handrails
- Seek treatment for medical and mental health conditions when you have symptoms
- Follow guidelines from local authorities on social distancing and sheltering in place.

Common Behavioral Reactions

- An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- Using alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, or even prescription medications to reduce distressing feelings
- Outbursts of anger, feeling irritated, and blaming other people
- Difficulty accepting help or helping others
- Difficulty trusting others
- Problems in school or work
- Wanting to be alone most of the time and isolating yourself

Taking Care of Your Mind and Body

- Engage in relaxing activities
- Eat healthy food
- Stay hydrated
- Try to get regular exercise and sleep
- Spend time outdoors and enjoy nature
- Avoid the use of alcohol and drugs or participating in risky behaviors
- Avoid stimulants like caffeine, sugar, or nicotine



Common Cognitive Reactions

You may experience problems in your thinking, such as:

- Trouble remembering things
- Difficulty thinking clearly and concentrating
- Feeling confused
- Worrying a lot
- Difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty talking about what happened or listening to others

Coping Tips and Techniques

- **Remember that there is no “right way” to deal with your feelings.** It is important is to find a way that works for you and your family. Be patient with yourself and others.
- **Limit news consumption.** Constant replay of news reports can increase stress and anxiety. Only rely on information from professional organizations who are responsible for providing accurate updates for your community, locally and nationally.
- **Express your emotions.** Holding in your feelings can be unhealthy. Know that during times of uncertainty it's normal to experience a range of emotions. It's important to share your feelings with family and friends you can confide in.
- **Use spirituality, meditation, or relaxation techniques.** Prayer, meditation, yoga, mindfulness, guided imagery, and other relaxing activities can all be effective means of relieving stress.
- **Establish a daily routine.** Daily routines such as meal times, work, exercise and sleep will help minimize stress.

Expand your social network by using technology

These are unprecedented times as we adjust to social distancing, both personally and professionally. One way to stay in touch with your friends and family, or to connect with your colleagues when working remotely, is the use of technology platforms. The technology companies below are offering free access to online services:

Cisco: Expanded access of their free Webex platform: Plus free 90-day licenses are available to businesses that are not Webex customers.

Google: Free access to advanced Hangouts Meet video-conferencing capabilities to all G Suite and G Suite for Education customers globally until July 1, 2020.

LogMeIn: Free “emergency remote work kits” available for three months, including GoToMeeting, presentation platform GoToMeeting, and remote desktop access provider LogMeIn.

Microsoft: Free six-month license to individuals and IT professionals to access the Teams Office 365 software in order to help facilitate videoconferencing and remote work capabilities

Voices of September 11th (VOICES)

Provides long-term support services and access to mental health care and resources for 9/11 victims' families responders and survivors, and assists communities in responding to and recovering from other tragedies

More Resources: voicesofseptember11.org