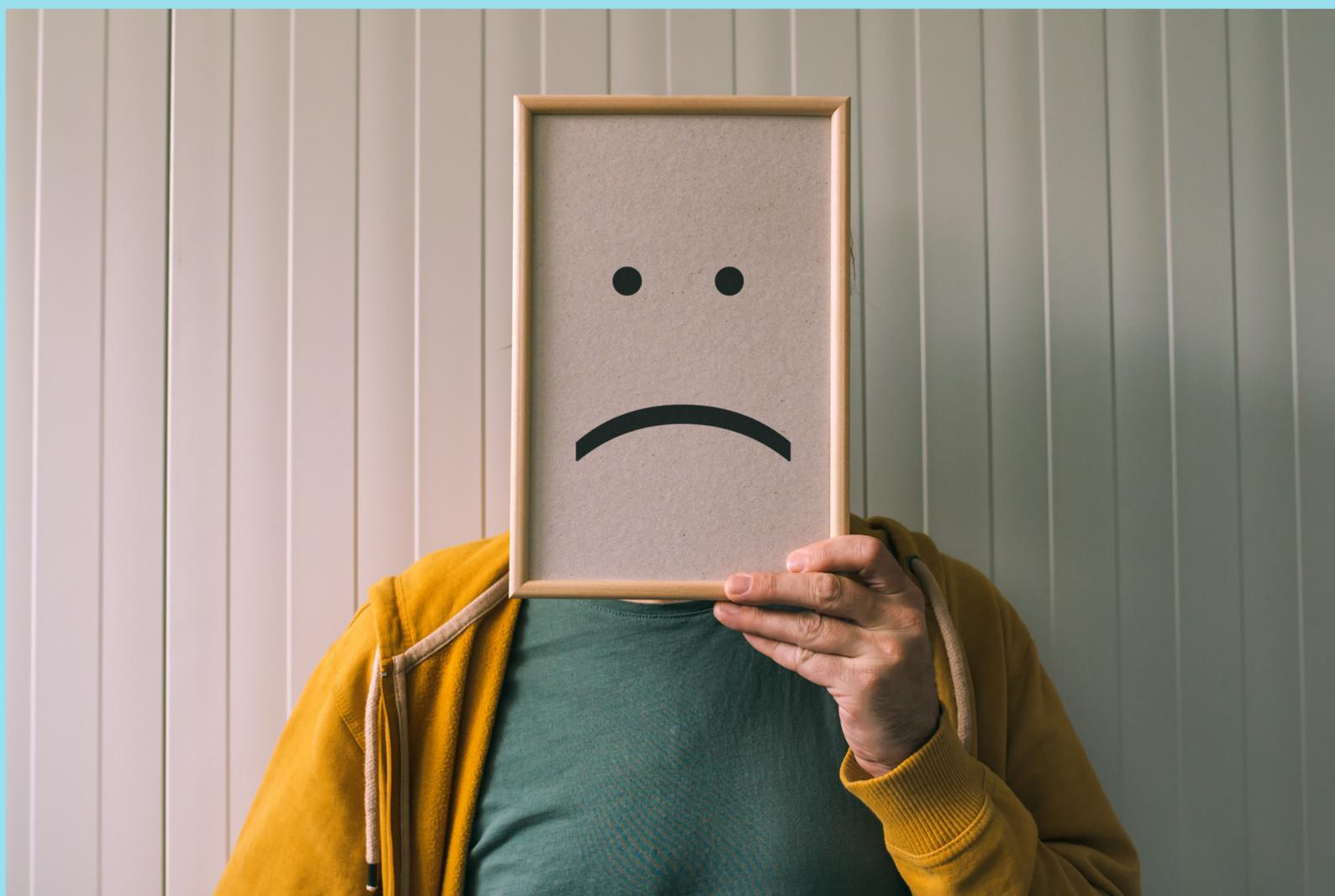


DEPRESSION & ANXIETY IN A POST-COVID WORLD



Dr. Sambunaris
& a s s o c i a t e s

Anxiety and Depression Specialists

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*Founder and Medical Director,
Dr. Sambunaris & Associates
Institute for Advanced Medical Research*

Angelo Sambunaris, M.D., a Certified Physician Investigator (C.P.I.) by the Association of Physicians in Clinical Research, has been a leader in the field of clinical research for over two decades. He currently serves as Founder, CEO and Medical Director of Dr. Sambunaris & Associates and the Institute for Advanced Medical Research. Dr. Sambunaris also serves as an Adjunct Professor at Mercer University College of Pharmacy.

Dr. Sambunaris has been a Principal Investigator in more than 200 studies on the treatment of anxiety disorders, depression, insomnia, ADHD, Fibromyalgia, and Binge Eating Disorders.

Dr. Sambunaris earned his medical degree from the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Additional medical training continued with an internship in the Department of Medicine, Hershey Medical Center of the Pennsylvania State University; Psychiatry Residency, Department of Psychiatry, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center; Psychiatry Career Resident Program (externship), General Adult Psychiatric Services, Colorado State Hospital; and Clinical Staff Fellow, Neuropsychiatric Research Hospital National Institute of Mental Health, Washington, D.C.

EVERYONE IS FEELING A “LITTLE OFF” THESE DAYS

You think everything is starting to get back to normal when out of the blue it hits: a vague uneasiness—a nagging awareness that something isn’t right. You find yourself struggling with sleep, or you’re snapping at your children for petty things. You miss being with other people, but you don’t call them. The pandemic—and the changes you’ve had to make—feels like it has finally used up every bit of reserve you had to deal with life’s challenges.

YOU’RE NOT ALONE

Disasters and public health emergencies, just like Covid-19, can lead to significant disruptions and stress. The depth and length of this change to our “normal” way of life has resulted in people struggling with their mental well-being. Social tensions along economic, cultural, and political lines have only compounded stress.

It is critical for us all to take the extra time to check in and pay attention to how we are feeling and reacting to situations on a daily basis? Am I getting enough sleep? Am I feeling overwhelmed? How long have I been “stuck” feeling a particular way?

The stressors related to Covid-19 have left many of us with temporary symptoms such as sleeplessness, irritability, anxiety, depressed mood, and feeling overwhelmed.

But for some, Covid has triggered a more serious medical condition that is not going to go away when the masks finally come off and movie theaters open back up.



COVID HAS DRIVEN UP THE RATES OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic recession have negatively affected many people's mental health and created new barriers for people already struggling with mood and substance use disorders.

MANY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS

For some, new feelings of anxiety and depression will resolve as routines resume.

Others, however, will continue to struggle with these feelings.



OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IS STRETCHED THIN

The impact of the pandemic on social determinants of health, such as employment, income levels, and housing and food security, have magnified issues with the healthcare system. Resource uncertainty can cause negative psychological well-being and even elevated blood pressure for many people.



Many report that the proportion of U.S. adults with symptoms of anxiety and/or depression has multiplied **4x** since before the pandemic, with the bulk of those affected being **women and people of color**.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the mental health effects of the pandemic resulting from school closures and the suspension of social activities, and also are affected by the stress their parents are experiencing.

Because more **than 50% of children** who receive mental health services do so in a school setting, school closures have removed access to mental health professionals for the children who need them most.



New graduates are also struggling. Across the country, recent graduates are seeking employment in one of the worst job markets since the Great Depression.

The national unemployment rate is 6.7%, but the unemployment rate for young people rose to 27% in April 2020, only dropping to 11.7% as of October 2020.

As these young adults struggle to find work in their respective fields, they are also stressed over the need to pay back student loans.

With an outlook from employers that is sounding more and more like the recession of 2008, some fear we are creating a generation that will fail to launch and carry the burden of greater mental health challenges as they grow older.



Covid has also had a devastating effect on women's mental health according to CARE International. Women were **3x** more likely than men to report rising anxiety, stress, and mental health challenges.

Even under non-pandemic circumstances, women are **2x** as likely to struggle with depression than men.

Working mothers have been particularly exposed to stressors over the past year. Forced to juggle heightened work and career demands, remote online schooling for their children, limited child-care options and household duties have made it a rough time for women.

617,000 women left the workforce in September 2020, a number 8x larger than their male counterparts.

STRESS IS THE BEGINNING



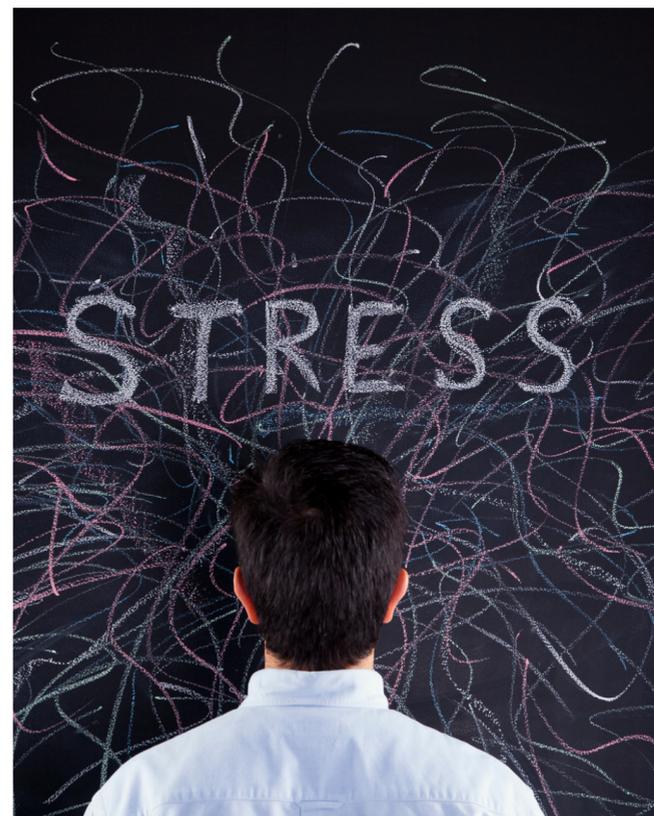
STRESS CAUSES ON A TEMPORARY BASIS:

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, desires, and interests
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, bad dreams, or even nightmares
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, shortness of breath, palpitations, and skin rashes
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, and other substances

It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and even worry from time to time. Stress is not a mental health condition, as it typically resolves as life events change.

Taking a break from watching, reading, or listening to news stories and social media can be particularly helpful.

Activities that are good for both body and mind can help you move past stress and build emotional resilience.



HEALTHY WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS:

- Deep breathing, stretching, or meditation.
- Eating healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Exercising regularly.
- Getting plenty of sleep.
- Avoid excessive alcohol, tobacco, and substance use.
- Talking with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.



BUT WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THESE DO NOT WORK?

IS IT STRESS OR ANXIETY?

There's a fine line between stress and anxiety. Both are emotional responses, but stress is typically caused by an external trigger.

Anxiety, on the other hand, is defined by persistent, excessive worries that don't go away even in the absence of a stressor. Anxiety leads to a nearly identical set of symptoms as stress: insomnia, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, muscle tension, and irritability.

If your stress or anxiety does not respond to self-management actions (like those listed above), or if you feel that either stress or anxiety are affecting your day-to-day functioning or mood, you should talk to a medical professional for a definitive diagnosis.

Anxiety disorders differ from short-term feelings of anxiety in their severity and in how long they last. Anxiety disorders are also more common than you might think.

19% of Americans over the age of 18 had an anxiety disorder in the past year, and 31% of Americans will experience an anxiety disorder during their lifetime.

IS IT STRESS OR DEPRESSION?

Depression can happen even if everything in life seems fine or it can be triggered by stress.

Depression will eventually interfere with a person's ability to carry out daily functions. More than just sadness, it is a loss of interest in enjoyable activities, like hobbies or spending time with other people. Still others will experience agitation or anger versus a feeling of being flat or down.

There is a wide range of symptoms that are associated with true clinical depression, making it a diagnosis that is best made by a psychiatrist; A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who specializes in this area.

An estimated 17.3 million American adults experienced at least one major depressive episode in 2017.

WHEN SHOULD YOU SEEK HELP?



You should consider seeing a psychiatrist who specializes in anxiety and depression if you find yourself overwhelmed by these symptoms, and struggle to to experience pleasure in activities.



People with a family history of addiction, anxiety, or depression, or a personal history of domestic violence, may be more at risk, as are people who have been exposed to COVID-19 or affected by losing their job or health insurance, for example.



Those who do not address a mental health medical condition like anxiety or depression can be putting themselves at risk for more serious potential long-term problems, including heart health, high blood pressure, obesity, and substance abuse.

YOU HAVE QUESTIONS WE HAVE ANSWERS

Taking steps to manage your stress on your own can help prevent depression or anxiety.

However, if you've tried self-help techniques and they aren't working, or if you have felt sad, withdrawn, overwhelmed, or suicidal for two weeks or longer, help is available.

Our customized treatment programs include a combination of medication management and education along with supporting therapies in the area of counseling, nutrition, and exercise to help each patient achieve their goals and return to a happy, healthy life.

Call us today at 770-817-9200 to speak with one of our specialists to learn more about how we can help.



Dr. Sambunaris
& a s s o c i a t e s



Institute for Advanced
Medical Research

5755 North Point Parkway, Ste 256

Alpharetta, GA 30022

770-817-9200

IAmResearch.org

DrSambunaris.com

Resources:

<https://www.apa.org>

<https://www.kff.org>

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org>

<https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/psychiatry>

<https://www.yalemedicine.org/news>

<https://www.statnews.com>

<https://cdn.jamanetwork.com/ama>

<https://www.cdc.gov>