



MAINTAINING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH DURING A PANDEMIC



PANDEMICS CAN BE STRESSFUL

- Fear and anxiety about a new disease and what could happen can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children such as depression, boredom, anger, irritability and frustration.
- Public health actions, such as social distancing, can make people feel isolated and lonely and can add to stress and anxiety.

PANDEMICS CAN BE STRESSFUL

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can cause the following:

Worsening of chronic health problems

Worry and fear about your own health and the health of loved ones

Worry about financial situation

Changes in eating or sleeping patterns

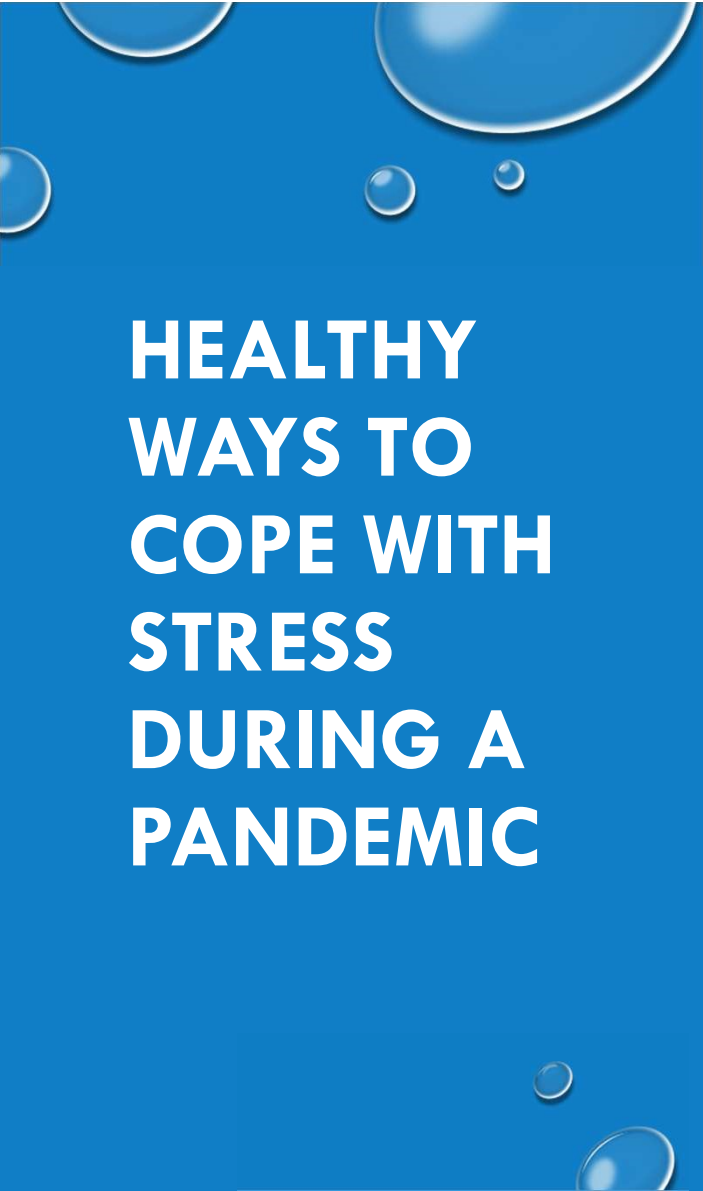
Increased use of tobacco, alcohol and other substances



PANDEMICS CAN BE STRESSFUL

People who respond more strongly to the stress may include:

- People who are at higher risk for severe illness
 - ✓ Older people, people with underlying medical conditions
- People who have existing mental health conditions
- People who have disabilities
- Care givers
- People who have economic struggles



HEALTHY WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS DURING A PANDEMIC

- Take care of your body:
 - ✓ Try to eat healthy, try to exercise, get plenty of sleep and avoid excessive alcohol and drug use
- Take breaks:
 - ✓ From watching, reading, or listening to news stories - hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting, only get news from trusted sources
- Take care of your emotional health:
 - ✓ Take time out for yourself, doing things you enjoy
- Connect with others:
 - ✓ Talk with people you trust about your concerns
- Stay connected to friends:
 - ✓ While social distancing measures are in place, consider connecting through social media, or by phone

CREATE A NEW ROUTINE

We are creatures of habit, and creatures of anxiety when our habits get disturbed. It may be possible to create a new structure for yourself:

- Exercise is important, pick a time, several days a week to go for a walk
- Cook! Cooking is a way to create a sense of routine that will keep you immersed in a task that demands constant attention and is a distraction from anxiety
- Connections, plan a time to reach out to friends and family through facetime, phone dates or text check-ins
- Music – surround yourself with your favorite music while exercising, cooking and other activities.

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**KNOWLEDGE IS
POWERFUL**

Be familiar with the symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do about it:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea



KNOWLEDGE IS POWERFUL

- If you have any symptoms:
 - ✓ You can get tested usually for FREE at any CVS or Walgreens
 - ✓ Also contact your primary healthcare provider to see how to proceed
 - It may bring peace of mind to get tested
- If you have an emergency warning symptom such as trouble breathing:
 - ✓ Get emergency care immediately



CHILDREN AND THE PANDEMIC


Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more “clingy,” withdrawing, anxious, agitated, etc.

- Inform children in a way they can understand, yet reassure them
- Keep regular routines as possible
- Try to be positive about changes, such as in-home school
- Make opportunities for children to play and relax
- Have family involved activities.

TIPS IF YOUR CHILD IS VIRTUALLY LEARNING

Many families are participating in virtual schooling. Virtual learning is new for most students. While virtual learning has been successful for colleges and universities, it can be a challenge for younger students ... and their parent(s):

- Prepare clothes in advance:
 - ✓ Have the next days clothes laid out the night before, this reduces stress and saves time in the morning
- Charge digital equipment the night before to be ready for the next day
- Maintain a routine
 - ✓ A regular time to go to bed, get up in the morning, start school, eat, take breaks, etc.
- Provide a healthy breakfast
 - ✓ Many can be prepared the night before such as overnight oats or breakfast bars.



TIPS IF YOUR CHILD IS VIRTUALLY LEARNING

- Start the day with routine hygiene:
 - ✓ Brushing teeth, dressing, etc. this promotes good habits
- Limit distractions:
 - ✓ Consider keeping the television off, remove toys from the learning area and limit background noise
- Create a designated workspace for the student
 - ✓ A desk, dining room table, or any area with enough workspace
- Partner with the teacher:
 - ✓ Let the teacher know what is and isn't working
- Reward the child for positive behavior.



HELPING OTHERS

If someone you know is struggling emotionally:

- Check in on a regular basis by calling, texting or video calls
- Offer to help with basic needs:
 - ✓ If you are going to the grocery store or pharmacy, see if they need anything
 - when dropping off items, **wear a mask** and **maintain social distancing**
- Point out the importance of a routine and exercise and share what you are doing for your own emotional health
- Suggest limiting the time spent watching or reading news
- Learn the warning signs of suicide
 - ✓ Suicide rates go up during pandemics

WHAT ELSE?

Though we are more stressed during COVID-19, here are other helpful tips:

- Experience nature - get outdoors!
- Count your blessings - instead of noticing what you don't have, take time to give gratitude for what you do have
- Meditate - think of your favorite place, the beach, the mountains or a place you would like to visit
- Set goals - the pandemic will be over at some point, what do you want to do and where do you want to go?
- BE KIND - it is contagious!

RESOURCES

- Disaster Distress Helpline 1-800-985-5990
 - Press 2 for Spanish
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-talk (8255)
- The Eldercare Locator 1-800-677-1116
- SAMHSA's National Helpline 1-800-662-help (4357)