

Emotional wellbeing during 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic



The feelings of isolation, loneliness and lack of control due to the impact of COVID-19 have an unprecedented toll on the emotional state of the population. A preliminary study in the United States population revealed that approximately half (45%) of American adults reported that their mental health has been negatively affected, due to the concerns and stress caused by the pandemic. It is normal to feel sad or worried during these times. However, it is important to talk about, acknowledge, and how to deal with these emotions.

Strategies to cope with distress

- **Keep a routine:** Despite being at home, keep a regular sleep schedule, and designate times for house and office work.
- **Support Network:** Create a good support network of family members, friends, neighbors, or church members, and maintain an open and honest line of communication with them.
- **Socialize:** Phone calls, videoconferences, and social media are a good way to keep in touch with your support network, whilst adhering to physical distancing measures.
- **Breathe:** If you feel stressed, engage in breathing practices. Slowly inhale through your nose for 4 seconds, hold for 2 seconds, and then, slowly, release for 6 seconds.
- **Exercise:** It doesn't matter where you are. Jump in place, walk around the house, or dance – just move. It is a good way to release endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin – they're collectively called the "happy hormones" as they improve your mood and help you release stress.
Please visit: <https://www.vmovement.org/>
- **Entertainment:** Limit watching stressful media no more than once per day. Instead, read literature, listen to music, or walk outdoors to relieve stress.
- **Diet:** Eat a healthy diet, including plenty fruits and vegetables, and reduce processed foods.
- **Alcohol:** Alcohol may initially seem to help, but it is known to be a central nervous depressor, and may likely worsen your emotional state.
- **Drugs:** Illicit drugs may create further problems and are not a solution.
- **Counseling:** If you want to seek counseling or, psychotherapy, or need more help, do not be shy. Even during these times, resources like telemedicine have become widely available for this purpose.

Recognizing mental health problems

It is important to recognize the symptoms of emotional disorders. Learn how to cope with them, and know when to seek out help!

Depression

A lot of people may feel sadness and loneliness during times of imposing isolation, illness. The most important thing to remember is that *you are not alone and this a temporary discomfort*.

It is advisable you seek professional help if you constantly feel any of the following:

- Sadness
- Loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy



- Feelings of guilt
- Exhaustion or lack of energy
- Difficulty focusing
- Restlessness
- Sleeping problems

Thoughts of hurting yourself or others: *Seek medical help immediately!* Either contact the Suicide Prevention Lifeline or visit the closest ER!

Anxiety

During the pandemic and hurricane season, one prevailing sensation is uncertainty and worry.

If the constant worry leads you to a state in which you:

- Cannot focus on your tasks
- Feel restless or irritable
- Sleep schedule is becoming alarmingly disturbed
- Muscle spasms

One type of anxiety disorder is the **panic attack** which is characterized by an overwhelming sense of anxiety and fear accompanied with physical symptoms such as chest pain, excessive perspiration, shortness of breath, dizziness, among others.

These symptoms mimic a heart attack and you may feel frightened. *However, this is not a life-threatening condition.* It is important to recognize, distinguish, and manage the symptoms of such disorders, as the emergency rooms may be overburdened due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

The pandemic is causing a lot of stress due to fear of catching or spreading the disease, unemployment/underemployment, closure of businesses, or death of a loved one.

Seek help, if you are constantly:

- Reliving traumatic experiences (i.e. nightmares or flashbacks)
- Avoiding anything that may cause too much stress
- Having intrusive negative thoughts

Crisis resources:

- PAS lifeline: ASSMCA 1-800-981-0023
- Suicide Prevention lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 para Español, or "[Lifeline Crisis Chat](#)".
- Proyecto Patria - UPR Río Piedras (Línea Crisis) Monday-Friday 10 AM- 6 PM, 787-766-5000.

For more information, please visit :

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

<https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/covid-19>

<https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>

<https://thewellnesssociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Spanish-Managing-Coronavirus-Anxiety-Workbook.pdf>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/exercise-and-stress/art-20044469>

<https://www.exerciseismedicine.org/>