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Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and ...

Apr. 13, 2020

Taking Care of Your Emotional Health



The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) will be stressful for everyone. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in

adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about,

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- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like medical providers
- People with mental health conditions or substance use

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others call:

- 911
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

People with mental health conditions should continue with treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. Additional information can be found at <https://bit.ly/39c5LlS>.

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

Things you can do to support yourself

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social

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several days in a row.

Reduce Stress in Yourself and Others

[Sharing the facts](#) about COVID-19 and understanding the actual risk to yourself and people you care about can make an outbreak less stressful. When you share accurate information about COVID-19 you can help make people feel less stressed and allow you to connect with them. Learn more about [taking care of your emotional health](#).

For Parents

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include:

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

There are many things you can do to support your child

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they do not understand.

- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

Learn more about [helping children cope](#).

For Responders

Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you. There are things you can do to reduce secondary traumatic stress (STS) reactions:

- Acknowledge that STS can impact anyone helping families after a traumatic event.
- Learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt).
- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the pandemic.
- Create a menu of personal self-care activities that you enjoy, such as spending time with friends and family, exercising, or reading a book.
- Take a break from media coverage of COVID-19.
- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned that COVID-19 is affecting your ability to care for your family and patients as you did before the outbreak.

Learn more [tips for taking care of yourself](#) during emergency response.

For Those Released from Quarantine

Being separated from others if a healthcare provider thinks you may have been exposed to COVID-19 can be stressful, even if you do not get sick. Everyone feels differently after coming out of quarantine. Some feelings include :

- Mixed emotions, including relief after quarantine

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Children may also feel upset or have other strong emotions if they, or someone they know, has been released from quarantine. [You can help your child cope.](#)

Resources

- [Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#)
- [Coping with stress during an infectious disease outbreakpdf iconexternal icon](#)
- [Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health during an Infectious Disease Outbreakexternal icon](#)
- [Helping Children Cope with Emergencies](#)
- [Coping After a Disasterpdf icon](#) – A Ready Wrigley activity book for children age 3-10
- [Emergency Responders: Tips for taking care of yourself](#)
- [Disaster Technical Assistance Centerexternal icon](#) (SAMHSA)

[This content is from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More information available at <https://bit.ly/3akAcrt.>]

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