Be Kind to Your Mind

HOW TO PROMOTE POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

WCT COVID-19 Task Force

March 29, 2020
When the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic, we at WCT pre-emptively advised the entire staff to home quarantine themselves. In this unsettling time of the novel coronavirus, India, among many other countries, is under a prolonged lockdown for the next several weeks, which means we will have to stay indoors through this duration. This can be an emotionally challenging period for each one of us and our families.

Lookout for signs of COVID-19 anxiety.

Some common signs of distress include -

- Feelings of numbness, disbelief, worry or fear.
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Difficulty sleeping
- Experiencing nightmares and upsetting thoughts.
- Lack of willingness to get out of bed and perform any task.
- Physical reactions - headaches, body pains, stomach problems, skin rashes.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Anger – about the situation, because of confinement. Heightened irritability
- Guilt at not being at work or being able to visit family.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
Here are some tips and suggestions for you to consider which will make dealing with this situation easier on your mind and body:

1. **Manage your consumption of the current news.**

   During this time of uncertainty, it is hard for us to not keep checking our phones for messages, reading or watching news on TV or social media. However, for many people, doing this constantly can lead to increased stress and anxiety. Prevention is the best cure, so limit the amount of time you spend thinking about it, and avoid obsessively watching disturbing news and logging in to social media.

2. **Be mindful.**

   Paying more attention to the moments in the present can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this kind of awareness ‘mindfulness’. Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges, enabling you to focus more on the present and worry less about the future.

3. **Stay connected with friends and family**

   It is normal to feel anxious or sad under the current circumstances. It is important that you talk to someone. It is okay to share and put your concerns into perspective. Call your friends and work colleagues to make sure they are doing okay. Communication is the key for us to maintain our health and
wellbeing. If you are worried you can always talk to us! The Task Force is here for you and we are only a phone call away.

4. **Explore self-management strategies.**

Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Listen to music, draw or paint, exercise, meditate, read or write. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and don’t overindulge in alcohol, avoid binge eating, and make sure to keep yourself well hydrated.

5. **Have a plan**

It is important to be prepared for the weeks-long period of self-confinement. Make realistic plans about stocking up on essential supplies such as food, medicines, etc. Do not panic or hoard items, but make sure you have enough for you and your family. Create a routine for yourself. Make a map of tasks that you would want to finish in the coming few days and set a daily task list; checking tasks off it can often lead to a feeling of accomplishment. These tasks need not always be work-related; even simple tasks like watering plants, making a phone call to a family member/friend can be helpful. If you stay alone, be in constant touch with your friends and family. If you have pets, make sure they are looked after and are exercised appropriately.

6. **Social distancing.**

This can be a new experience, especially for those of you who are used to social gatherings. But you must remember, this is very important and the lives of many will rely on all of us taking this seriously. Know that there will be a
visible end in sight to this new, yet a temporary living arrangement, and things will get back to normal.

7. Seek help or support if you need it

Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned that COVID-19 is affecting your ability to care for your family. It is okay to not be okay at this time. You are not the only one experiencing anxiety. Take solace in knowing that everyone is in this together and that the WCT team is looking out for each other.