

Inspire - Affirm - Engage

Coping with Covid-19 Stress

During these unprecedented times, we are all coping with some level of stress whether because of Covid-19 or other events going on in our communities. It has been shown that ongoing chronic stress can negatively affect one's health in many different ways. Sometimes these stressors can impact our healthy intensions. So, what can we do to address ongoing mental stress during COVID-19? Here are a few suggestions.

-Carmela Pontillo, RN, MSN, CBN, Carrie Tollefson, RD, Janet Ng, PhD

Tip #1: Acknowledge and Feel Your Emotions

Becoming in touch with your feelings and recognizing how your feelings are affecting your behaviors, is very important. Acknowledge any negative feelings and explore how they may be affecting your health and behavior choices. This may be a great opportunity to begin journaling. If your feelings are overwhelming, seeking guidance from mental health professionals is a great first step.



Support Groups

Overlake is offering virtual support groups for members of the Overlake program! For more information visit overlakehospital.org/classes

Overlake Program Clinic

425-467-3957

KP continues to move their support groups to a virtual platform. Stay tuned for updates!

Kaiser Program Clinic

425-502-3454, option 3



Tip #2: Take a Deep Breath

We have no control over the current Covid-19 crisis but we can take control of this moment in time. BREATH! Focus on what you can manage in this present moment. What can you accomplish today? What steps can you take to make necessary behavior changes? Keep it simple. For example, "today my plan is to walk 20 minutes in the park" or "today I will track all of the food that I eat."

Tip #3: Stick to Familiar Routines: During stressful times, it is important to have HOPE that things will get better. It is also very more important to stick with some familiar routines. This provides some confidence and control over how your day will unfold. Hold on to all the progress that you have worked so hard to achieve. Revisit the routines you had established that made this possible, especially with diet and exercise. In addition, changes in sleep routine can affect mood, energy levels and lead to worsening of metabolic and cardiovascular disease. This can lead to weight gain. Finally, remember to give yourself grace on those days when it is just too hard. Tomorrow is a new day.

Tip #4: Stay Physically Active

Our gyms and pools are closed. We no longer see our trainers. So now what? We are left to search for creative ways to keep active. Explore different apps to keep you exercising at home. Try yoga. Put on your favorite music and dance. This is the perfect time to try something different. And remember to limit screen time! This can increase anxiety and stress.

Tip #5: Resist the Temptation of Comfort Foods

It is common during times of mental stress to resort to “comfort food”. These foods are soothing but all too often they are higher in calories and highly processed. The easiest way to control this is to simply not bring them into your home. Out of sight, out of mind can be an effective way to not be bombarded by temptation. When making a grocery list, review it with a friend or family member. They can help to make sure healthier food options are chosen. When grocery shopping or ordering food, try not to be hungry or exceptionally stressed. So, if you are at the grocery store and you’re tempted by foods—try to walk past the tempting food and realize that it will only be more tempting when it is calling out your name when it’s in your home.



Tip #6: Stay Connected

While social distancing it can be easy to feel isolated and alone. Reach out to family and friends via phone or video chats. Seek out virtual support groups. Reach out to others who may be in greater need. This will not only help them but also give you a greater sense of connection and belonging. And remember that your clinical team is always there for you!

Look out for these common signs of distress:

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Physical reactions such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

CDC Taking care of your emotional health:

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>