

Taking Care of Your Mental Health during the CoVID19 Infectious Disease Outbreak

Infectious disease outbreaks, including Coronavirus (COVID-19) created a new type of crisis with a great deal of uncertainty about the nature of the disease, its spread, and its impact. This will understandably, affect individuals' emotional and mental health wellbeing- even among those who have not been directly exposed to the disease. Reactions to a crisis can appear very different from person to person and can occur at any time. Please consider the following recommendations for promoting your mental wellbeing during this time.

Things you can do to support yourself:

1. Staying Informed. Obtain the latest information during an infectious disease outbreak from credible and reliable sources of information. Up-to-date, accurate recommendations regarding disease prevention, self and family care, and travel guidance can be found at the following websites:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov
- UC San Diego resources for students <https://coronavirus.ucsd.edu/resources-for/students/index.html>

2. Limit media exposure. Turn off the television and/or alert messaging on your phone if it is increasing your distress. Exposure to media can be healthy or unhealthy, for some individuals knowing helps to feel a sense of control over the situation while for others it may reinforce anxiety and fear. Research has shown that excess media exposure to coverage of stressful events can result in negative outcomes, use trusted resources to gather the information you need then turn it off if it's causing stress.

3. Anticipate stress reactions. Emotional distress is common and normal in the context of uncertainty and potentially life-threatening situations, such as Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Recognize the signs of distress. Stress can present itself in different ways including physical, emotional, or cognitive ways. One common response for young adults is a feeling of invincibility and or emotional detachment which can lead to behaviors that May significantly increase risks.

- Some other common reactions include: •Excessive worry, hard to stop thinking about what happened •Sleeping Issues; having trouble sleeping or staying asleep • Ruminating •Hypervigilance; getting up to check the news or check on family • Difficulty relaxing • Muscle tension • feel keyed up or on edge • Increased alcohol, tobacco, or drug use • Irritability with emotional outbursts • Wanting to be alone /difficulty communicating • Crying frequently • Inability to feel pleasure • Feeling detached or numb • Changes in energy level.

- Some common physical responses can be: aches and pains and appetite changes

- Some common feelings are: sadness, guilt, anger, fear, and anxiety.

- Some common cognitive responses can be: memory issues, confusion, indecisiveness and decreased concentration

5. Try different strategies to reduce distress. There is no right or wrong way to deal with this stress. The strategies that will work for you will be yours, what works for you may not work for others. It is important to keep at it and try different things. Some strategies can include:

- a. Being prepared (e.g., developing a personal/ family plan for the outbreak).
- b. Educate yourself about preventive measures hand-washing technique, cough etiquette, to more complex medical recommendations for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.
- c. Talking to loved ones about worries and concerns, know that your feelings are normal and others may be experiencing them too. Connect with friends and family in novel ways if you're isolated. Connect with those you feel closest to for support.
- d. Schedule positive activities. Do things that are enjoyable, even if you don't feel like it. Like listening to music, exercising, practicing breathing routines, spending time in nature or with animals, journaling, or reading inspirational texts are some simple ways to help manage emotions.
- e. Take time to renew your spirit through prayer, meditation or helping others f. Eat a balanced and nutritious diet
- g. Get enough sleep every night. We know sleep is restorative reduces anxiety, helps learning, helps problem solving, and allows the brain to rest. Even short periods of sleep deprivation can be troublesome.
- h. Engage in exercise as much as possible for overall good health and to help reduce stress too i. If possible stick to your usual daily routine.

Helpful web-based programs for UCSD students:

iRelax

Free mp3s to help you meditate and relax through guided audio exercises. Take a break @ [iRelax](#)

[WellTrack](#) provides confidential self-guided tools and resources to help manage stress, anxiety and depression. WellTrack is great way to integrate mental health into your busy daily life without hassle. Consider it a "FitBit" for mental health.

[Sign-up for WellTrack here \(you will need to use your UCSD email address\)](#)

[MindWellU](#) delivers evidence-based, multilingual mindfulness e-training that has been shown to lower stress, increase resilience, and improve performance. MWU allows you to take a 30-day Mindfulness Challenge in which you are prompted to take 5-10 minutes per day to engage in a different Mindfulness exercise. You can even invite a buddy of your choice to do the challenge with you!

[Sign-up for MindWellU here \(you will need to use your UCSD email address\)](#)

If you are seeking more comprehensive and dedicated intervention, TAO is a highly interactive, web-based program that provides assistance to help overcome anxiety, depression,

relationships/communication, and other issues. This program provides detailed evidence-based intervention and interactive exercises/tools to directly address your mental health challenges. Learn more with a video introduction @ <https://vimeo.com/249680537>.

[Sign-up for TAO here](#) (select "Signup for Self-Help" and use your UC San Diego email address)

Mental Health Mobile apps

We've compiled mobile apps to support self-help, promote wellness, and serve as adjunctive tools for mental health counseling. Download @ **CAPS Self-Help**

For most people stress reactions will lessen over the first few weeks as we adapt to our new circumstances. However, when symptoms are significantly impacting functioning, becoming harder to manage, or are increasing in severity then there is increased need for concern. We encourage you to reach out to CAPS. Please call us at 858.534.3755 (24/7).

