

## **COVID-19: 5 Tips to Manage Your Mental Health and Well Being**

Stress and uncertainty of the COVID-19 outbreak can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Here are five key practices to help you cope with stress and stay stronger during this crisis.

**1. Limit your media exposure about the topic** – It is important to obtain accurate and timely public health information about COVID-19 and being properly informed and educated can reduce stress and anxiety. However, hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting. Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories about the pandemic, including social media.

**2. Be good to your body** – Mental health starts with physical wellness. Take care of your body. Get regular sleep and rest, eat healthy foods and stay physically active. Find a way to move every day. Consistent physical activity is well known to lower stress and anxiety and improve mood, not to mention strengthening your immune system. Try to avoid using alcohol or drugs as a way to cope with the stresses of isolation and uncertainty.

**3. Manage your thinking** – Your thoughts can be a powerful ally or formidable foe, perhaps now more than ever. Learn to manage your thinking in ways that support your well-being. Examine your worries and aim to be realistic in your assessment of the actual concern as well as your ability to cope. Avoid catastrophic thinking – ruminating about irrational, worst-case outcomes. To combat this, try to catch yourself when you go down a path of unhelpful or extreme thinking. Ask yourself, “Is this based on fact, and is it helpful to me right now?” Learn to put stressful situations in perspective.

**4. Create and follow a daily routine** – Maintaining a daily routine can help both adults and children preserve a sense of order and purpose in their lives despite the unfamiliarity of isolation or sudden life change. Try to include regular daily activities such as work, adequate sleep, exercise, spending time with family and friends, relaxation, learning or hobbies and activities that you enjoy.

**5. Connect with others** – Your face-to-face interactions may be limited, but psychologists suggest using phone calls, text messages, video chat and social media to stay connected to family and friends. Schedule a virtual meeting with family and friends for a virtual happy hour. If you’re feeling stressed or anxious, talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Be well & safe.....