WHAT TO DO, WHEN I DON’T KNOW WHAT TO DO

KEY STRATEGIES FOR SELF-CARE & REFLECTION IN [ISOLATION]

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NATURAL REACTIONS TO STRESS DURING A CRISIS INCLUDE:

• **Fear & Worry** about your own health OR the health of those you care about
• Changes in your *sleeping* and/or *eating* patterns
• Difficulty sleeping and/or concentrating (**this can make it difficult to focus on: work, school, relationships, etc.**)
• Worsening of current chronic health issues you may have (or someone else you know has)
• Increased use of: alcohol, drugs, tobacco, & other ways of coping and/or numbing/escaping current stress
UGH-OY-SERIOUSLY?!?!
WHAT TO BE AWARE OF AS A PARENT:

- Recognizing that not all children & teenagers will respond similarly to the changes of this crisis.
- Excessive crying or irritation in younger (0-12 y/o) children.
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (i.e. toileting accidents or bedwetting, etc).
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs (adolescents/teens preferably)

- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating and/or sleeping patterns
- Irritability and ‘acting out’ behaviors in teenagers
- Poor school performance or avoiding school completely
- Difficulty with attention & concentration
- Avoidance of activities they enjoyed in the past
POSSIBLE FACTORS THAT MAY IMPACT CHILDREN EMOTIONALLY DURING THIS TIME:

- Direct involvement with the emergency (i.e. have a family member testing positive for COVID-19 or parent is on the frontlines helping)
- Previous traumatic or stressful event that they are reminded of
- Belief that the child or their loved one may die or become sick
- Loss of a family member, close friend or pet
- Separation from any caregivers (those the child would normally see that they haven’t seen lately)
- Physical injury

- How Parents & Caregivers respond during this time
- Family resources
- Relationships & communication among family members
- Related exposure to mass media coverage of the crisis & aftermath
- Ongoing stress due to the change in familiar routines & living conditions
- Cultural differences
- Community resilience
HOW DO I SUPPORT MY FAMILY?

- Talking openly with children/teens about the current COVID-19 outbreak.
- Answer questions & share facts that are understandable.
- Reassure children/teens they are safe.
- Let them know it is OKAY to feel: upset/scared/worried
- Let them know how you are working through this time.
- Limit your family’s exposure to news coverage on the event—including social media.
- Continue regular routines prior to crisis— OR begin creating new routines/schedules.
- As a FAMILY: take breaks from work/school, get sleep, exercise, eat well.
- Connect with others as much as possible to stay involved in others’ lives & NOT isolate.
STEPS TO CARE FOR MYSELF & LOVED ONES

• Avoid close contact with people who are sick
• Stay home when you are sick- EXCEPT to get medical care
• Cover your coughs/sneezes-try to use a tissue if possible
• Washing hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with soap & water
• If there isn’t soap/water- hand sanitizer of 60% alcohol
• Clean & disinfect surfaces around home/car (i.e. tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs & cabinet handles)
• Launder items in WARMEST water, including plush toys for kids.
WHAT DOES ANXIETY LOOK LIKE?

- Feeling agitated or angry
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Defiance or other challenging behaviors
- Having high expectations for yourself- including school/work/sports/relationships/etc.
- Avoiding activities or events (cancelling at the last minute)
- Struggling to pay attention and focus
- Intolerance of uncertainty (needing to know everything)
- Desire to control people and/or events
- Crying and difficulty managing emotions (feeling like a rollercoaster)
- Feeling worried about situations or events (future tripping)
- Over planning for situations and events (what if this happens...?)
WHAT ANXIETY FEELS LIKE

• Second-guessing yourself
• Muscle tension
• Sweating, a lot
• Trouble sleeping
• Chest pain (can feel like difficulty taking deep breaths)
• Over-thinking all things (replaying conversations in your mind)
• Increased heart rate
• Your mind & body refusing to cooperate, no matter what you know is rational
WHAT DOES DEPRESSION LOOK LIKE?

• Feelings of: guilt, worthlessness or hopelessness
• Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
• Decreased energy & tiredness
• Insomnia or oversleeping
• Difficulty concentrating & making decisions
• Low appetite or increased appetite
• Irritability
• Thoughts of self-harm or suicide
WHAT DEPRESSION FEELS LIKE

- Body aches
- Headaches
- Digestive issues (IBS)
- Back pain
- Chest pain
- Muscle cramps
- Lack of energy
- Loss of motivation
- Substance abuse
STRATEGIES TO HELP WITH OUR MOOD

• Taking calm breaths
• Stop magnifying problems
• Stop worrisome thoughts
• Shift your point of view
• Combat negative self-talk
• Ask yourself, “what do I need right now?”
• Make a gratitude list
• Talk to someone
• Think of something funny
• Create a schedule
• Start somewhere, anywhere
• Try 4, 3, 2, 1.
TURN YOUR BRAIN OFF & TRY TO MOVE

- Dance to your favorite song
- Take a walk
- Do the basics of PT (push up/jumping jacks, etc)
- Clean the house (pick a spot & go for it)
- Try an online workout (youtube/pinterst/apps)
“THEY SAY ‘KNOWLEDGE IS POWER’. BUT MORE POWERFUL THAN KNOWLEDGE, IS UNDERSTANDING. WITH UNDERSTANDING, COMES TOLERANCE. AND, WITH TOLERANCE, WE CAN MOVE BEYOND BARRIERS.” – MICHAEL ARLEN
RESOURCES:

• Disaster Distress Helpline – 1-800-985-5990
• National Domestic Violence Hotline – 1-800-799-7233
• Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration’s – TEXT 66746
• Veterans Crisis Line – 1-800-273-8255 (press 1)
• U.S.VETS, Women Vets on Point – 1-213-247-0009
• U.S.VETS, Outside the Wire, OC – 1-888-556-9993
• www.usvetsinc.org
HELPFUL LINKS


• Children in Disasters- Stories & Interactive Games [https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/children](https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/children)