

COVID-19 HAS PLUNGED THE WORLD INTO UNCERTAINTY AND THE CONSTANT NEWS ABOUT THE PANDEMIC CAN FEEL RELENTLESS. ALL OF THIS IS TAKING ITS TOLL ON PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH, PARTICULARLY THOSE ALREADY LIVING WITH CONDITIONS LIKE ANXIETY AND OCD.

SO HOW CAN WE PROTECT OUR MENTAL HEALTH?

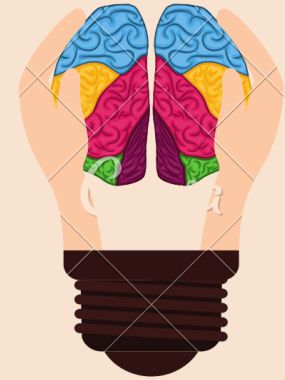
BEING CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEWS IS UNDERSTANDABLE, BUT FOR MANY PEOPLE IT CAN MAKE EXISTING MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS WORSE. THE FEAR OF BEING OUT OF CONTROL AND UNABLE TO TOLERATE UNCERTAINTY ARE COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF MANY ANXIETY DISORDERS. SO IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE THAT MANY INDIVIDUALS WITH PRE-EXISTING ANXIETY ARE FACING CHALLENGES AT THE MOMENT.

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**THAPAR INSTITUTE
COUNSELING CELL (TICC)**



THAPAR INSTITUTE
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(Deemed to be University)



A lot of anxiety is rooted in worrying about the unknown and waiting for something to happen, COVID-19 is that on a macro scale



COPING WITH STRESS AND ANXIETY

The COVID-19 pandemic can cause stress and anxiety because it is disrupting normal life for many people all at once. While it is important to be informed and to take action to limit the spread of infection, the amount of information and attention on this topic can increase stress and anxiety

STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS

DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: WHAT HAS WORKED FOR YOU BEFORE THAT HELPS MANAGE YOUR STRESS AND ANXIETY? MANY OF THOSE STRATEGIES YOU CAN STILL RELY ON. ONE CHALLENGE IS THAT THE RESPONSE TO PANDEMICS CAN DISRUPT ROUTINES; PEOPLE MAY STOP THE ACTIVITIES THEY USE TO KEEP WELL (E.G., EXERCISE) AND ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES THAT CAN MAKE THINGS WORSE.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS THAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL. SOME MIGHT APPLY TO YOU AND SOME MIGHT NOT - OR THEY MAY NEED TO BE ADAPTED TO SUIT YOU PERSONALLY, YOUR PERSONALITY, WHERE AND WITH WHOM YOU LIVE. PLEASE BE CREATIVE AND EXPERIMENT WITH THESE IDEAS AND STRATEGIES.

AVOID BURNOUT

WITH WEEKS AND MONTHS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AHEAD, IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE DOWN TIME. MIND RECOMMENDS CONTINUING TO ACCESS NATURE AND SUNLIGHT WHEREVER POSSIBLE. DO EXERCISE, EAT WELL AND STAY HYDRATED. WE SUGGEST PRACTICING THE "APPLE" TECHNIQUE TO DEAL WITH ANXIETY AND WORRIES.

Acknowledge: Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.

Pause: Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Pause and breathe.

Pull back: Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this apparent need for certainty is not helpful and not necessary. It is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think. Thoughts are not statements or facts.

Let go: Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.

Explore: Explore the present moment, because right now, in this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell. Right now. Then shift your focus of attention to something else - on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry, or do something else - mindfully with your full attention.

FIND A BALANCE: STAY TUNED IN, BUT KNOW WHEN TO TAKE A BREATHER

While staying informed is helpful, too much information may not provide extra benefit. Limit checking sources to once per day or less if you can. This includes reading or listening to news stories about COVID-19. Even though things are shifting rapidly, daily changes are not likely to affect how you should manage your risk. **Bring**

an intentional mindset to unplugging:

- Set aside some time to unplug from all electronics, including phone, tablets and computers. Disconnect for a while from social media outlets. You may need to schedule this to make sure it happens.
- Do something fun and healthy for yourself instead (e.g., read, work, exercise).

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE RESILIENT AND BE CAREFUL WITH THE 'WHAT IFS' : OUR STRESS AND ANXIETY GENERALLY CAUSE US TO FOCUS ON NEGATIVES AND TRIGGER 'WHAT IF' QUESTIONS, SUCH AS 'HOW WILL I COPE IF I GET SICK?' OR 'HOW WILL I MANAGE IF I HAVE TO SELF-ISOLATE?' **THEY CAN ALSO DRIVE US TO THINK ABOUT WORST CASE SCENARIOS:**

- IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS, PEOPLE OFTEN OVERESTIMATE HOW BAD THE SITUATION CAN GET, BUT UNDERESTIMATE HOW WELL THEY WILL BE ABLE TO COPE. PEOPLE ARE RESILIENT AND HAVE COPING SKILLS THEY USE EVERY DAY. THINK OF DIFFICULT OR CHALLENGING SITUATIONS YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO MANAGE.
- EVEN IF THINGS WEREN'T PERFECT, WHAT DID YOU DO TO COPE WITH THE SITUATION? REMIND YOURSELF THAT YOU CAN HANDLE STRESS AND THAT IF YOU FEEL YOU NEED SUPPORT, YOU CAN REACH OUT TO FAMILY, FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES OR PROFESSIONALS.
- TRY TO REPLACE CATASTROPHIC THOUGHTS WITH SOMETHING LIKE, "THIS IS DEFINITELY A DIFFICULT TIME, BUT WE WILL GET THROUGH IT TOGETHER." DON'T UNDERESTIMATE WHAT YOU ARE ABLE TO DO WHEN FACED WITH CHALLENGES.

DEAL WITH PROBLEMS IN A STRUCTURED WAY:

ALL THE ISSUES YOU MIGHT NEED TO ADDRESS DURING THIS PANDEMIC SITUATION MAY FEEL OVERWHELMING. IT CAN BE USEFUL TO IDENTIFY WHICH THINGS ARE ACTUALLY PROBLEMS THAT NEED TO BE SOLVED OR ADDRESSED, AND WHICH ARE JUST WORRIES THAT ARE NOT NECESSARILY GROUNDED IN REALITY.



DECREASE OTHER STRESS: COVID-19

COVID-19 is probably not the only source of stress in your life right now.

Consider addressing other sources of stress to reduce your overall level of anxiety.

Challenge your thinking, practicing relaxation and meditation or other strategies you may have used in the past that have helped.

PRACTICE RELAXATION AND MEDITATION: RELAXATION STRATEGIES AND MEDITATION CAN HELP REDUCE OR MANAGE YOUR LEVELS OF STRESS AND ANXIETY. THERE ARE MANY OPTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- FORMAL MEDITATION PRACTICE SUCH AS YOGA OR
- MINDFULNESS MEDITATION
- INFORMAL OR SELF-HELP APPROACHES SUCH AS BOOKS AND ONLINE VIDEOS
- RELAXATION THROUGH ANY ACTIVITY THAT YOU FIND ENJOYABLE AND RELAXING

CHOOSE AN ACTIVITY THAT WORKS FOR YOU AND THAT YOU ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE DOING. START SLOWLY AND GRADUALLY WORK TOWARD A REGULAR PRACTICE.

SEEK SUPPORT:

SOCIAL DISTANCING DOES NOT MEAN YOU

SHOULD BREAK OFF ALL CONTACT FROM LOVED ONES. BEING ALONE CAN LEAD TO SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME THINKING ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION, RESULTING IN INCREASED STRESS AND ANXIETY.

IT CAN BE HELPFUL TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE WHEN YOU ARE FEELING STRESSED. REACH OUT AND GET SUPPORT FROM THESE PEOPLE - EITHER IN PERSON OR THROUGH PHONE OR VIDEO CALLS OR TEXT MESSAGING. TRY TO AVOID PEOPLE WHO ARE NEGATIVE WHEN TALKING ABOUT CURRENT AFFAIRS OR EVENTS, OR WHO GENERALLY INCREASE YOUR STRESS AND ANXIETY.



EAT HEALTHY

Eating healthy can help us feel better. When we are stressed, many people might choose comfort foods that are not actually good for stress and overall health. As much as is possible, choose more fruits and vegetables, and drink lots of water.

STAY ACTIVE: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS A GREAT WAY TO REDUCE STRESS AND ANXIETY, AND IMPROVE OUR MOOD AND OVERALL HEALTH. IF YOU ARE SELF-ISOLATED, FIND WAYS TO EXERCISE IN YOUR HOME. FOR EXAMPLE, USE YOUR STAIRS OR FOLLOW AN EXERCISE VIDEO ON YOUTUBE.

CHALLENGE WORRIES AND ANXIOUS THOUGHTS:

HIGH LEVELS OF ANXIETY AND STRESS ARE USUALLY FUELLED BY THE WAY WE THINK. FOR EXAMPLE, YOU MIGHT BE HAVING THOUGHTS SUCH AS "I AM GOING TO DIE" OR "I WON'T BE ABLE TO COPE." THESE THOUGHTS CAN BE SO STRONG THAT YOU BELIEVE THEM TO BE TRUE. HOWEVER, NOT ALL OUR THOUGHTS ARE FACTS; MANY ARE SIMPLY BELIEFS THAT WE HOLD. SOMETIMES WE HAVE HELD THESE BELIEFS FOR SO LONG THAT THEY FEEL LIKE FACTS. HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO WORK THROUGH AND CHALLENGE YOUR WORRIES AND ANXIOUS THOUGHTS.:

- START WITH CATCHING YOUR THOUGHTS. WHEN YOU ARE FEELING ANXIOUS OR STRESSED, STOP AND WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU ARE THINKING.
- THERE MAY BE MORE THAN ONE THOUGHT GOING THROUGH YOUR MIND WHEN YOU ARE FEELING ANXIOUS.
- ONCE YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED THOUGHTS, CHALLENGE IT.
- ASK YOURSELF:
 - IS THIS THOUGHT TRUE?
 - HOW DO I KNOW IT'S TRUE?
 - IS IT 100% TRUE AND ALWAYS TRUE?
 - WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR THE THOUGHT?
 - WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE AGAINST THE THOUGHT?
 - HAS THE THING I'M WORRIED ABOUT EVER HAPPENED BEFORE?
 - WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?
 - HOW DID I COPE? WHAT WAS THE END RESULT? AFTER WORKING THROUGH THESE APPROACHES, SEE IF YOU CAN COME UP WITH A MORE BALANCED THOUGHT.



KEEP LOOKING FORWARD

Remember the famous saying, 'this too shall pass'. It may not feel like it, but things will return to normal. In the meantime, it is important to have confidence that things will improve, that people will recover, and things will get back to normal. In addition to maintaining your long-term goals, also think about things that you will do each day and week, which you can and will enjoy. Again, try and bring others into your plans; they might also benefit from thinking about the future.

Most importantly maintain Social Distancing.

"LIFE DURING LOCKDOWN IS CHALLENGING. WE MAY FEEL EXHAUSTED AND WORN OUT. DON'T LET THIS FEELING OVERCOME YOU- DISTRACT FROM STRESSFUL SITUATIONS AND USE THE NEW FOUND TIME IN A PRODUCTIVE WAY. BE POSITIVE, COVID-19 IS PREVENTABLE, PROTECT YOURSELF AND BE SUPPORTIVE TO OTHERS. ASSISTING OTHERS RELIEVES OUR OWN ANXIETIES TOO. TOGETHER, WE CAN HAVE A BETTER TOMORROW".

DR. INDERVEER CHANA, DEAN OF STUDENT AFFAIRS, PROFESSOR OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING, THAPAR INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY, PATIALA.





Thapar Institute Counseling Cell (TICC) recognizes and understands the current feelings of anxiety, distress & uncertainty, and offers advice for your well being. We are offering all are counseling services in an online mode till the normalcy is restored.

Dr. Sonam Dullat (Professional Student Counselor) &
Ms. Garima Garg (Assistant Student Counselor) -
Thapar Institute Counseling Cell (TICC),
Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology
Patiala.

You may register for the counseling services by:Email: sonam.dullat@thapar.edu / garima.garg@thapar.edu,
Call/WhatsApp: Dr. Sonam Dullat (8872739998) / Ms. Garima Garg (9781700762).

