

Mental Health in the time of Covid-19

Asha Banu Soletti

Centre for Health and Mental Health
School of Social Work

TISS

It is about everyone

- I want to go out to the garden and play, I am bored
- I am too dizzy, confused, cannot focus on the online inputs by the teacher
- Sick and tired of multi-tasking and feel overwhelmed-Work from home
- Verge of losing my job, cannot handle the insecurities I live with
- Will I be able to see my children who are staying miles away?
- I have the itchy throat, should I go visit hospital? Am all alone
- Disparities, and people in extremely impoverished contexts
- Painful media posts
- Harsh realities

Why?

- The disruption of normal life as a result of lockdown or stay home orders has significantly impacted the mental health of people
- A recent umbrella review of mental health outcomes of quarantine and similar prevention strategies has found that depression, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, posttraumatic stress symptoms, sleep disorders, panic, stigmatization, low self-esteem, lack of self-control are highly prevalent among individuals impacted with physical isolation
- Another rapid review suggested that stressors like prolonged quarantine, fear of infection, frustration, boredom, inadequate supplies, inadequate information, financial loss, and stigma have resulted in long-lasting posttraumatic stress symptoms, confusion, and anger in the mass population
- Chaos and Uncertainty, Fear and Anxiety , Despair, hopelessness, Sleeplessness, Restlessness are common in the new normal
- Poor and destructive coping mechanisms
- MH resources-Accessibility and Availability

Who?

- Everyone,
- Children and Elderly
- Women and DV, LGBTQI Community
- Health care professionals
- Bereaved Families (Covid and Non covid)
- Economically Vulnerable groups
- Persons with disability and PWMI

How?

- Apply a whole community approach TO PROMOTE, PROTECT AND CARE FOR MENTAL HEALTH
 - responding proactively to reducing pandemic-related adversities that are known to harm mental health, for example domestic violence and acute impoverishment
 - Helplines
 - Health Communication and awareness
 - Manuals

How?

- ENSURE WIDESPREAD AVAILABILITY OF EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT
 - supporting community actions that strengthen social cohesion and reduce loneliness
 - investing in mental health interventions that can be delivered remotely
 - ensuring uninterrupted in-person care for severe mental health conditions by formally defining such care as essential services to be continued throughout the pandemic

How?

- SUPPORT RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 BY BUILDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE FUTURE
 - using the current momentum of interest in mental health to catalyze mental health reforms
 - building human resource capacity to deliver mental health and social care

Challenges

- Technology supports across the continuum
- Reach out as a concern

Roles we can play

- Self Care
- Stay connected
- Be Kind and compassionate
- Do not trivialise
- Educate yourself on sources of support
- Refer
- Look, Listen and Link (PFA)

Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.



Basic Psychosocial Skills A Guide for COVID-19 Responders



Long way to go...

- Make small efforts to support yourself and others
- Not a sprint run and a Marathon, where the end line is still not visible
- Stay Safe, Breathe and Smile