



Behavioral Health

Behavioral Health Tool kit

Resources for health care professionals, first-responders, and other essential workers.

This toolkit includes information created by other agencies. The San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) does not endorse the content, viewpoint, accuracy, opinions, policies, products, services, or accessibility of the information. The information contained in this toolkit is up-to-date as of July 17, 2020.

**WHETHER YOU'RE A
MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL,
FIRST RESPONDER
OR OTHER ESSENTIAL
WORKER,
DBH IS HERE TO HELP.**

Call or text to connect with specially trained staff who can listen and provide you with support and behavioral health resources.

**Free and confidential.
Daily from 7 a.m to 10 p.m.**

CALL

**(909) 421-9233
(909) 458-1517
(760) 956-2345**

OR TEXT

**(909) 420-0560
(909) 535-1316
(760) 734-8093**



Behavioral Health

If you speak another language, language assistance services are available to you free of charge by dialing (888) 743- 1478. TTY users dial 711. DBH complies with applicable federal, civil rights laws and does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, or LEP www.sbcounty.gov/dbh



ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT SERVICES ARE STILL AVAILABLE.

Call (909) 421-4601
or (888) 743-1478 for
a free and confidential
assessment.

Serving youth and adults.



Behavioral Health

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Stress Management for Caregivers and Kids

There are simple things you can do every day, at home, to help regulate your child's stress. Talk about what's going on, keep kids connected to their networks, and try to keep your usual routine. The following tips can also help you and your child manage your stress responses:

1. Maintain Relationships

Double down on supportive relationships within your household and help your kids maintain connections with friends, family, school mates, or faith-based organizations through phone, chat, age-appropriate social media, or letter writing.

Turn off media and devices for high-quality time together making art, dancing, cooking or reading.

ZZZ

3. Healthy Sleep

Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day. Turn off electronics at least a half hour before bed. Limit food and beverages containing caffeine, like soda and chocolate.

5. Mindfulness, Meditation, Prayer



Practice mindfulness, such as meditation, yoga, or prayer for 20 minutes, two times a day. Apps like Headspace and Calm are easy, accessible ways to get started. Talk about, write out or draw five or more things we are all grateful for each day.

2. Exercise Daily

Engage in 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Get your bodies moving and heart rates up to burn off stress.



4. Nutrition

Ensure you are getting proper nutrition to help combat stress. Keep regular mealtimes, includes snacks for kids.

Minimize refined carbohydrates, high-fat and high-sugar foods.



6. Mental Health Support

Have open conversations as a family about emotional and mental health. Minimize the amount of exposure/consumption of news or other media content that feels upsetting for both you and your child.

Need to talk with someone? Call or text the San Bernardino County Dept. of Behavioral Health to be connected with specially trained staff who can listen and provide you with support and behavioral health resources. **It's free and confidential. Call (909) 421-9233 or text (909) 420-0560.**



Behavioral Health



Are you working to help people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Use these principles of Psychological First Aid (PFA) when working with survivors:



Respond to requests and initiate contacts in a nonintrusive, compassionate, and helpful way.



Help people meet their basic needs.



Calm emotionally overwhelmed or disoriented individuals.



Identify immediate needs and concerns.



Empower people to take steps to meet their needs.



Encourage people to reach out to family and friends via phone, text, or other virtual methods.



Provide information about common stress reactions.



Link people with available resources.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline:
1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)

PFA Online Course from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-pfa-online>.

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center website at <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac> or call us at 1-800-308-3515.

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.
1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TTY) • <https://www.samhsa.gov>

PEP20-01-01-014

Feeling stressed or anxious about the COVID-19 pandemic?

Use these tips to reduce your stress and anxiety:



Limit or avoid news coverage if it causes you more stress and anxiety.



Focus on positive things in your life that you can control.



Keep stress under control by exercising, eating healthy, reading, or by trying relaxation techniques such as yoga.



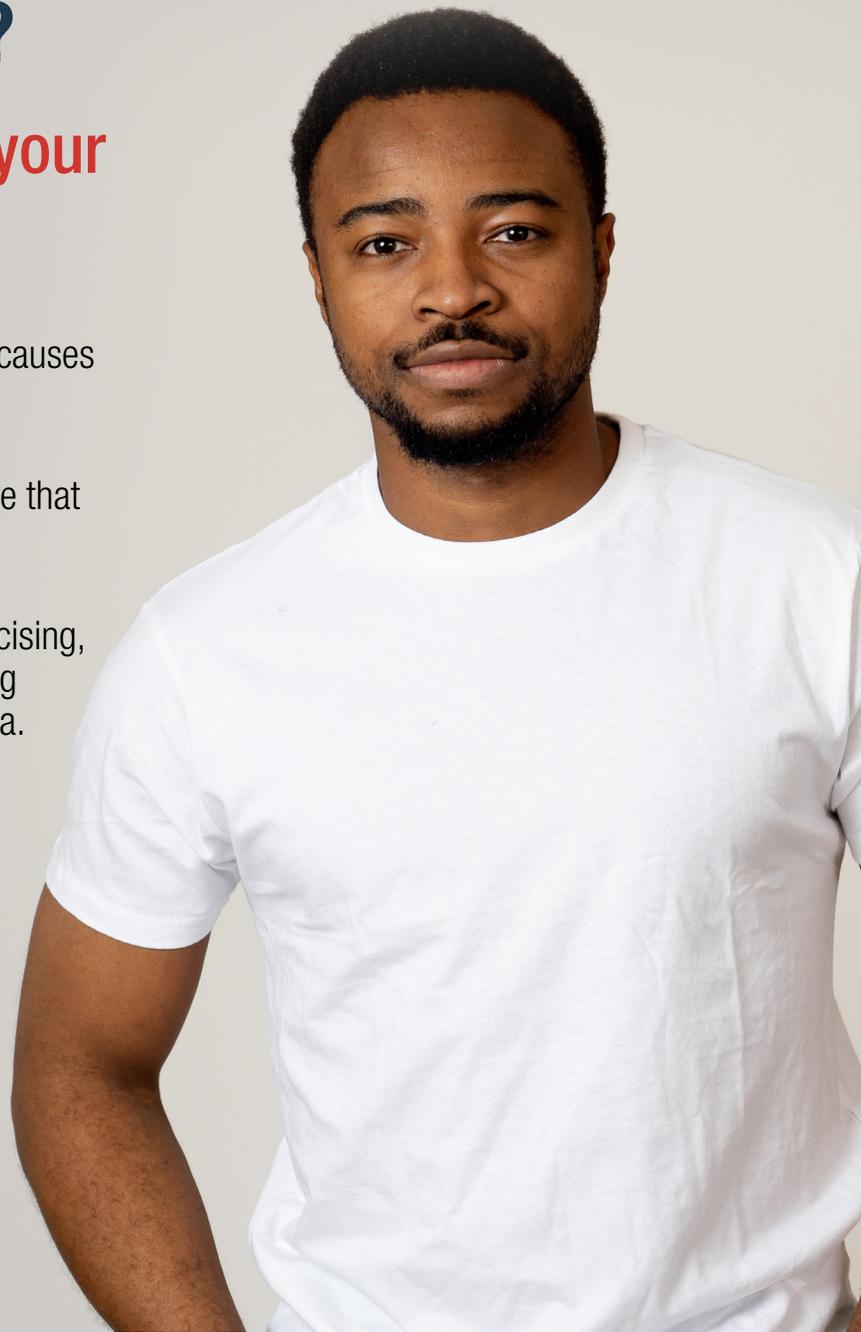
Talk about your experiences and feelings to loved ones and friends, if you find it helpful.



Connect with others who may be experiencing stress about the pandemic.



Take time to renew your spirit through meditation, prayer, or helping others in need.



If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or someone else, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH) provides counseling and support before, during, and after disasters. Contact the DDH at 1-800-985-5990 or text **TalkWithUs** to 66746.

SAMHSA's National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.
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PEP20-01-01-015



Tips for Healthcare Professionals: **COPING WITH STRESS AND COMPASSION FATIGUE**

As a healthcare professional, you may face stress on the job under usual conditions due to long shifts, competing responsibilities, and witnessing or hearing about difficult patient experiences. As a responder on the front lines of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, you are likely working longer hours, seeing loved ones less, and working in a more stressful environment. At the same time, you may be coping with the mental health effects that all types of disasters, including public health emergencies, often have. As such, you may be noticing signs of stress and distress in yourself and your coworkers.

This tip sheet explores stress and compassion fatigue, as well as signs of distress after a disaster. It identifies ways to cope and enhance resilience, along with resources for more information and support.

Stress and Compassion Fatigue

Stress encompasses the ways that your body and brain respond to something you perceive as a demand in your environment. As a healthcare professional, your career requires you to respond to multiple demands at once, and you are likely already experienced in stress management.



Issues can arise, however, when you run short of time to recover between stressors, when you feel as though you cannot respond effectively to the many demands you face, or when you are part of a disaster-affected community and you are also having reactions to that experience.

Compassion fatigue includes two elements: burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Burnout is physical and mental exhaustion leading to reduced ability to cope with your environment. Burnout involves fatigue, frustration, a sense of helplessness, and reduced pleasure in work or other responsibilities. Secondary traumatic stress is the stress you may experience due to empathy with others you see going through trauma, including physical trauma such as serious injury, illness, or death. People also may experience secondary traumatic stress through empathy with others who talk with them about their traumas.



Signs and Symptoms of Disaster-related Distress

People affected by disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic often experience physical changes, as well as changes in thinking, emotions, and behavior. In addition to signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue, you may notice the following signs and symptoms of disaster distress in yourself and those around you.

Physical

- Stomachaches or diarrhea
- Changes in appetite and eating habits
- Headaches or other pains without a clear physical cause
- Jumpiness or exaggerated startle response
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, sleeping too much, or trouble relaxing

Cognitive

- Difficulty remembering things
- Difficulty thinking clearly or concentrating
- Confusion
- Increased worry
- Trouble making decisions

Emotional

- Anxiety and fear
- Overwhelming sadness
- Anger
- Guilt
- Numbness and inability to feel joy or sadness

Behavioral

- Increase or decrease in activity levels and reduced stamina
- Frequent crying
- Use of alcohol or other drugs in an attempt to reduce distressing feelings or to forget
- Angry outbursts
- Desire to be alone most of the time and deliberate self-isolation
- Risk-taking behaviors



Signs and Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

In the current highly stressful environment, you may notice the following signs and symptoms in yourself or your coworkers:

- Increased startle response to activity around you, a feeling of being “on edge”
- Difficulty making decisions
- Exhaustion
- Difficulty sleeping
- Impaired ability to care for patients and/or clients
- Intrusive thoughts about patients and/or clients
- Reduced enjoyment or satisfaction with work
- Sense of lack of control or agency in your job
- Feelings of disconnection from colleagues and work teams
- Feelings of being overwhelmed by the amount of work to be done
- Anger and irritability
- Reduced ability to feel sympathy or empathy
- Avoidance of reminders of upsetting experiences with patients
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs



Addressing and Preventing Compassion Fatigue

As a healthcare professional, you probably already understand the importance of self-care to maintain your ability to work effectively. You need to take care of yourself first, and allow others to care for you, to be able to do your best work in caring for others. This section suggests strategies for self-care, stress management, and relaxation. Based on what has worked for you in the past, you may want to come up with a set of strategies and schedule them on a regular basis as part of a stress management and self-care plan. Such a plan can be adjusted if you find it is not realistic or helpful. Give yourself credit for all you manage to do in the current, challenging environment.

Self-care and Stress Management

Do your best to attend to your physical health and consider the following:

- **Try to be physically active, ideally several times each week, taking part in activities you enjoy.** Try walking or running, if there are places where you can maintain a safe distance between yourself and others. (If not, try exercising early or late in the day, or choosing less sought-after routes, if you can do so safely.) You can also do push-ups or sit-ups at home, dancing, or anything else you enjoy. Many workouts are available online or on television—and many do not require payment or equipment.
- **Strive to sleep and eat well.** If possible, get enough sleep or at least rest. Aim for 7 to 9 hours a night. Do your best to eat healthy food. Drink enough fluids to stay hydrated.
- **Try to avoid increasing use of alcohol and other drugs.** Although substances may help feelings seem more manageable in the short term, they can also lead to dependence and keep you from addressing issues over which you have control.

Also key to health and resilience is maintenance of your support networks. Try to remember to do the following:

- **Stay in contact with loved ones, including family and friends.** Although social distancing orders mean that many of us cannot be together in person, several online meeting platforms allow you to talk remotely with loved ones. Phone calls are helpful as well. You can also send letters and postcards to family members and friends.
- **Turn to colleagues for contact and support at work.** Even brief interactions are important. Take opportunities to recognize colleagues who have done impressive work in patient care or team support during the outbreak—informal recognition in conversation or by email can have a positive effect too. Remember that you are part of a team; you do not have to do it alone.

Following are ideas for activities that may help you reduce stress and relax, process your experience, and reconnect to your values and priorities:

- **Visualization.** Imagine that you are in a place that is peaceful and calming to you—a place you have been, or one where you would like to be. You may want to write a description of this place, record yourself reading what you have written, and then listen to the recording as a way to relax. Also, many visualization



Progressive Muscle Relaxation—Instructions:

1. Get into a comfortable position.
2. Choose a muscle group (e.g., muscles in your feet or lower legs).
3. Breathe in and tighten the muscles in the group for 5 to 10 seconds.
4. Breathe out and release the muscles suddenly. Relax for at least 10 seconds.
5. Repeat the process with another muscle group. It often helps to progress from head to toe or vice versa.

and guided imagery scripts and videos for relaxation are available online, as are apps and podcasts.

- **Progressive muscle relaxation.** One sign of stress is tense muscles, which is why stress can lead to headaches, backaches, and exhaustion. Progressive muscle relaxation is a systematic way to relax your muscles. Please refer to the instructions in the callout box for steps to follow.
- **Mindful movement such as yoga or tai chi.** In addition to offering the health benefits of other exercise, yoga and tai chi may help with stress management. Along with the many centers offering classes online, videos are available online to use as guidance.
- **Meditation.** Meditation has many benefits, including reduced anxiety, depression, and blood pressure, as well as insomnia relief. A session can be as short as a few minutes. You can access classes that many centers and institutes are offering online, sometimes free of charge. A host of mobile apps can be used to start or strengthen a meditation habit.



The 4–7–8 Breathing Technique for Relaxation

1. Sit quietly, relax, and close your eyes. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge on the roof of your mouth just behind your top front teeth. Your tongue should remain in this position throughout the exercise.
2. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whooshing sound. It may help to purse your lips.
3. Close your mouth, and inhale quietly through your nose for a count of four.
4. Now hold your breath for a count of seven.
5. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whooshing sound, to a count of eight.
6. Repeat steps 2–5 three times, for a total of four breaths.

In this technique, exhalation should take twice as long as inhalation. This ratio is the important part; the exact amount of time you spend on each phase is not important.

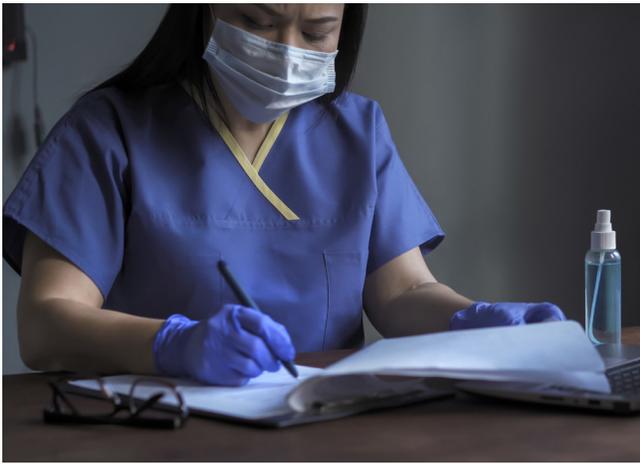
SAMHSA offers a video about stress management for disaster responders that features a demonstration of this breathing exercise: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqpCCnmwNVY&feature=youtu.be>.

- **Breathing exercises.** When experiencing stress and strong emotions, people often constrain their breathing, and breathing exercises can be an effective way to relax. You can try deep breathing, or breathing into and out of your abdominal area instead of from your chest. Imagine your breath going into and out of your belly as you breathe. Another option is the 4–7–8 technique. Please see the callout box for instructions.
- **Humor.** Humor and laughter can help relieve stress and, if shared, build bonds between people. Seek out sources of humor that have made you laugh in the past, such as specific cartoonists and authors, satirical publications and news shows, stand-up comedians, and television and movie comedies.
- **Journal writing or drawing.** Write or draw in a journal if you find it helpful. This can be on paper, on a computer, or in an app. It can be as minimal as writing down one or two things you are grateful for a few times each week, or things you are pleased that you have accomplished.
- **Spiritual and religious practices.** Some congregations and spiritual organizations are now offering online, live-streamed services and observances. Some are archiving services online. Participation in a religious or spiritual group can be helpful for meaning-making, reflection, and connection with a community.

Tips for Managers

If you manage other employees and have adequate staff, one step you can take to reduce staff stress is to schedule employees so that they have time to rest and recover between shifts. If possible, it can also be helpful to schedule staff so that they move into shifts in positions involving less stress after completing shifts in high-stress positions, so that they have time to recover between shifts of more intense work.

In addition, recognizing staff members for the work they do may help prevent compassion fatigue. You also can offer managerial support to



employees and, as much as possible, structure the work environment to encourage and allow time for case discussions.

When To Seek Professional Support

If you or someone you care about is overwhelmed by stress and reactions to the pandemic, you may want to reach out for professional mental health and/or substance use services and treatment. Acknowledging the need for help is a sign of strength. Even just a few visits can be helpful.

One place to seek support is with your employer—most have an employee assistance program, which offers short-term counseling and referrals. Many psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors are now offering services by phone or through videoconferencing services. Some offer weekend and evening hours to accommodate work schedules. You can also check out the Helpful Resources section for free, confidential help with crises and referrals.



Helpful Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857
Toll-free: 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)
TTY: 1-800-487-4889
Email: samhsainfo@samhsa.hhs.gov
SAMHSA Store: <https://store.samhsa.gov>

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center

Toll-free: 1-800-308-3515
Email: dtac@samhsa.hhs.gov
Website: <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

SAMHSA Disaster Mobile App

Website: <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/samhsa-disaster>

Helplines

SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll-free (English and español): 1-800-985-5990
TTY: 1-800-846-8517

SMS (English): text "TalkWithUs" to 66746

SMS (español): text "Hablamos" to 66746

Website: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

Website (español): <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/espanol>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-free (English): 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

Toll-free (español): 1-888-628-9454

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (1-800-799-4889)

Website (English): <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Website (español): <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/en-espanol>

Treatment Locator

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-free: 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357) (24/7/365)
Treatment Referral Information Service in English and español)

TTY: 1-800-487-4889

Website: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

**Note: The views, opinions, and content expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).*

SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

PEP20-01-01-016

Tips For Social Distancing, Quarantine, And Isolation During An Infectious Disease Outbreak

What Is Social Distancing?

Social distancing is a way to keep people from interacting closely or frequently enough to spread an infectious disease. Schools and other gathering places such as movie theaters may close, and sports events and religious services may be cancelled.

What Is Quarantine?

Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. It lasts long enough to ensure the person has not contracted an infectious disease.

What Is Isolation?

Isolation prevents the spread of an infectious disease by separating people who are sick from those who are not. It lasts as long as the disease is contagious.

Introduction

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, local officials may require the public to take measures to limit and control the spread of the disease. This tip sheet provides information about **social distancing**, **quarantine**, and **isolation**. The government has the right to enforce federal and state laws related to public health if people within the country get sick with highly contagious diseases that have the potential to develop into outbreaks or pandemics.

This tip sheet describes feelings and thoughts you may have during and after social distancing, quarantine, and isolation. It also suggests ways to care for your behavioral health during these experiences and provides resources for more help.

What To Expect: Typical Reactions

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations such as an infectious disease outbreak that requires social distancing, quarantine, or isolation. People may feel:

Anxiety, worry, or fear related to:

- Your own health status
- The health status of others whom you may have exposed to the disease
- The resentment that your friends and family may feel if they need to go into quarantine as a result of contact with you
- The experience of monitoring yourself, or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of the disease
- Time taken off from work and the potential loss of income and job security
- The challenges of securing things you need, such as groceries and personal care items
- **Concern** about being able to effectively care for children or others in your care
- **Uncertainty or frustration** about how long you will need to remain in this situation, and uncertainty about the future
- **Loneliness** associated with feeling cut off from the world and from loved ones
- **Anger** if you think you were exposed to the disease because of others' negligence
- **Boredom and frustration** because you may not be able to work or engage in regular day-to-day activities
- **Uncertainty or ambivalence** about the situation
- **A desire** to use alcohol or drugs to cope
- **Symptoms of depression**, such as feelings of hopelessness, changes in appetite, or sleeping too little or too much

- **Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**, such as intrusive distressing memories, flashbacks (reliving the event), nightmares, changes in thoughts and mood, and being easily startled

If you or a loved one experience any of these reactions for 2 to 4 weeks or more, contact your health care provider or one of the resources at the end of this tip sheet.

Ways To Support Yourself During Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation

UNDERSTAND THE RISK

Consider the real risk of harm to yourself and others around you. The public perception of risk during a situation such as an infectious disease outbreak is often inaccurate. Media coverage may create the impression that people are in immediate danger when really the risk for infection may be very low. Take steps to get the facts:

- Stay up to date on what is happening, while limiting your media exposure. Avoid watching or listening to news reports 24/7 since this tends to increase anxiety and worry. Remember that children are especially affected by what they hear and see on television.
- Look to credible sources for information on the infectious disease outbreak (see page 3 for sources of reliable outbreak-related information).

BE YOUR OWN ADVOCATE

Speaking out about your needs is particularly important if you are in quarantine, since you may not be in a hospital or other facility where your basic needs are met. Ensure you have what you need to feel safe, secure, and comfortable.

- Work with local, state, or national health of-

ficials to find out how you can arrange for groceries and toiletries to be delivered to your home as needed.

- Inform health care providers or health authorities of any needed medications and work with them to ensure that you continue to receive those medications.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Health care providers and health authorities should provide information on the disease, its diagnosis, and treatment.

- Do not be afraid to ask questions—clear communication with a health care provider may help reduce any distress associated with social distancing, quarantine, or isolation.
- Ask for written information when available.
- Ask a family member or friend to obtain information in the event that you are unable to secure this information on your own.

WORK WITH YOUR EMPLOYER TO REDUCE FINANCIAL STRESS

If you're unable to work during this time, you may experience stress related to your job status or financial situation.

- Provide your employer with a clear explanation of why you are away from work.
- Contact the U.S. Department of Labor toll-free at 1-866-487-2365 about the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows U.S. employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for serious medical conditions, or to care for a family member with a serious medical condition.
- Contact your utility providers, cable and Internet provider, and other companies from whom you get monthly bills to explain your situation and request alternative bill payment arrangements as needed.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Reaching out to people you trust is one of the best ways to reduce anxiety, depression, loneliness, and boredom during social distancing, quarantine, and isolation. You can:

- Use the telephone, email, text messaging, and social media to connect with friends, family, and others.
- Talk “face to face” with friends and loved ones using Skype or FaceTime.
- If approved by health authorities and your health care providers, arrange for your friends and loved ones to bring you newspapers, movies, and books.
- Sign up for emergency alerts via text or email to ensure you get updates as soon as they are available.
- Call SAMHSA’s free 24-hour Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990, if you feel lonely or need support.
- Use the Internet, radio, and television to keep up with local, national, and world events.

- If you need to connect with someone because of an ongoing alcohol or drug problem, consider calling your local Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous offices.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

If you are in a medical facility, you may have access to health care providers who can answer your questions. However, if you are quarantined at home, and you’re worried about physical symptoms you or your loved ones may be experiencing, call your doctor or other health care provider:

- Ask your provider whether it would be possible to schedule remote appointments via Skype or FaceTime for mental health, substance use, or physical health needs.
- In the event that your doctor is unavailable and you are feeling stressed or are in crisis, call the hotline numbers listed at the end of this tip sheet for support.

USE PRACTICAL WAYS TO COPE AND RELAX

- Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate or pray, or engage in activities you enjoy.
- Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do something fun after a hard task.
- Talk about your experiences and feelings to loved ones and friends, if you find it helpful.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking; consider keeping a journal where you write down things you are grateful for or that are going well.

AFTER SOCIAL DISTANCING, QUARANTINE, OR ISOLATION

You may experience mixed emotions, including a sense of relief. If you were isolated because

Sources for Reliable Outbreak Related Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
<http://www.cdc.gov>

World Health Organization

Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization
525 23rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
202-974-3000
<http://www.who.int/en>

you had the illness, you may feel sadness or anger because friends and loved ones may have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious.

The best way to end this common fear is to learn about the disease and the actual risk to others. Sharing this information will often calm fears in others and allow you to reconnect with them.

If you or your loved ones experience symptoms of extreme stress—such as trouble sleeping, problems with eating too much or too little, inability to carry out routine daily activities, or using drugs or alcohol to cope—speak to a health care provider or call one of the hotlines listed to the right for a referral.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or someone else, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

Helpful Resources

Hotlines

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-985-5990 (English and español)

SMS: Text TalkWithUs to 66746

SMS (español): "Hablanos" al 66746

TTY: 1-800-846-8517

Website (English): <http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Website (español): <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/espanol>

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and español)

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-Free (English): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Toll-Free (español): 1-888-628-9454

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

Website (English): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Website (español): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/spanish.aspx>

Treatment Locators

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator Website:

<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

FindTreatment.gov

For help finding treatment 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

<https://findtreatment.gov/>

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center

Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515

Email: DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

***Note: Inclusion or mention of a resource in this fact sheet does not imply endorsement by the Center for Mental Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.**

SAMHSA Publication No. PEP20-01-01-007



SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration



SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

Talking With Children:

TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS, PARENTS, AND TEACHERS DURING INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAKS

What You Should Know

When children and youth watch news on TV about an infectious disease outbreak, read about it in the news, or overhear others discussing it, they can feel scared, confused, or anxious—as much as adults. This is true even if they live far from where the outbreak is taking place and are at little to no actual risk of getting sick. Young people react to anxiety and stress differently than adults. Some may react right away; others may show signs that they are having a difficult time much later. As such, adults do not always know when a child needs help.

This tip sheet will help parents, caregivers, and teachers learn some common reactions, respond in a helpful way, and know when to seek support.

Possible Reactions to an Infectious Disease Outbreak

Many of the reactions noted below are normal when children and youth are handling stress. If any of these behaviors lasts for more than 2 to 4 weeks, or if they suddenly appear later on, then children may need more help coping. Information about where to find help is in the Helpful Resources section of this tip sheet.

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, 0–5 YEARS OLD

Very young children may express anxiety and stress by going back to thumb sucking or wetting the bed at night. They may fear sickness, strangers, darkness, or monsters. It is fairly common for preschool children to become clingy with a parent, caregiver, or teacher or to want to stay in a place where they feel safe. They may express their understanding of the outbreak repeatedly in their play or tell exaggerated stories about it. Some children's eating and sleeping habits may change. They also may have aches and pains that cannot be explained. Other symptoms to watch for are aggressive or withdrawn behavior, hyperactivity, speech difficulties, and disobedience.

- **Infants and Toddlers, 0–2 years old**, cannot understand that something bad in the world is happening, but they know when their caregiver is upset. They may start to show the same emotions as their caregivers, or they may act differently, like crying for no reason or withdrawing from people and not playing with their toys.
- **Children, 3–5 years old**, may be able to understand the effects of an outbreak. If they are very upset by news of the outbreak, they may have trouble adjusting to change and loss. They may depend on the adults around them to help them feel better.

EARLY CHILDHOOD TO ADOLESCENCE, 6–19 YEARS OLD

Children and youth in this age range may have some of the same reactions to anxiety and stress linked to infectious disease outbreaks as younger children. Often younger children within this age range want much more attention from parents or caregivers. They may stop doing their schoolwork or chores at home. Some youth may feel helpless and guilty because they are in a part of the world currently unaffected by the outbreak, or where the public health system protects people against outbreaks in ways it cannot in other parts of the world.

- **Children, 6–10 years old**, may fear going to school and stop spending time with friends. They may have trouble paying attention and do poorly in school overall. Some may become aggressive for no clear reason. Or they may act younger than their age by asking to be fed or dressed by their parent or caregiver.
- **Youth and Adolescents, 11–19 years old**, go through a lot of physical and emotional changes because of their developmental stage. So it may be even harder for them to cope with the anxiety that may be associated with hearing and reading news of an infectious disease outbreak. Older teens may deny their reactions to themselves and their caregivers. They may respond with a routine “I’m okay” or even silence when they are upset. Or they may complain about physical aches or pains because they cannot identify what is really bothering them emotionally. They may also experience some physical symptoms because of anxiety about the outbreak. Some may start arguments at home and/or at school, resisting any structure or authority. They also may engage in risky behaviors such as using alcohol or drugs.

How Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers Can Support Children in Managing Their Responses to Infectious Disease Outbreaks

With the right support from the adults around them, children and youth can manage their stress in response to infectious disease outbreaks and take steps to keep themselves emotionally and physically healthy. The most important ways to help are to make sure children feel connected, cared about, and loved.

- **Pay attention and be a good listener.** Parents, teachers, and other caregivers can help children express their emotions through conversation, writing, drawing, playing, and singing. Most children want to talk about things that make them anxious and cause them stress—so let them. Accept their feelings and tell them it is okay to feel sad, upset, or stressed. Crying is often a way to relieve stress and grief.



- **Allow them to ask questions.** Ask your teens what they know about the outbreak. What are they hearing in school or seeing on TV? Try to watch news coverage on TV or the Internet with them. Also, limit access so they have time away from reminders about the outbreak. Don’t let talking about the outbreak take over the family or classroom discussion for long periods of time.

- **Encourage positive activities.** Adults can help children and youth see the good that can come out of an outbreak. Heroic actions, families and friends who travel to assist with the response to the outbreak, and people who take steps to prevent the spread of all types of illness, such as hand washing, are examples. Children may better cope with an outbreak by helping others. They can write caring letters to those who have been sick or lost family members to illness; they can organize a drive to collect needed medical supplies to send to affected areas.
- **Model self-care, set routines, eat healthy meals, get enough sleep, exercise, and take deep breaths to handle stress.** Adults can show children and youth how to take care of themselves. If you are in good physical and emotional health, you are more likely to be readily available to support the children you care about.



Tips for Talking With Children and Youth of Different Age Groups During an Infectious Disease Outbreak

A NOTE OF CAUTION! *Be careful not to pressure children to talk about an outbreak or join in expressive activities. While most children will easily talk about the outbreak, some may become frightened. Some may even feel more anxiety and stress if they talk about it, listen to others talk about it, or look at artwork related to the outbreak. Allow children to remove themselves from these activities, and monitor them for signs of distress.*

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, 0–5 YEARS OLD

Give these very young children a lot of emotional and verbal support.

- Get down to their eye level and speak in a calm, gentle voice using words they can understand.
- Tell them that you always care for them and will continue to take care of them so they feel safe.
- Keep normal routines, such as eating dinner together and having a consistent bedtime.

EARLY CHILDHOOD TO ADOLESCENCE, 6–19 YEARS OLD

Nurture children and youth in this age group:

- Ask your child or the children in your care what worries them and what might help them cope.
- Offer comfort with gentle words or just being present with them.
- Spend more time with the children than usual, even for a short while.
- If your child is very distressed, excuse him or her from chores for a day or two.
- Encourage children to have quiet time or to express their feelings through writing or art.

Helpful Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

5600 Fishers Lane -- Rockville, MD 20857
Toll-Free: 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)
Email: info@samhsa.hhs.gov
SAMHSA Store: <https://store.samhsa.gov>

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center

Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515 Email: DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov
Website: <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

Hotlines

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll-Free: -877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)
(English and español)

SMS: Text TalkWithUs to 66746

SMS (español): "Hablamos" al 66746

TTY: 1-800-846-8517

Website (English):

<https://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Website (español): <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/espanol>

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and español)

Website: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

Child Welfare Information Gateway

Toll-Free: 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) Website:
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/responding/reporting/how>

Treatment Locator

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)(24/7 English and español);

TTY: 1-800-487-4889

Website: <https://findtreatment.gov>

Resources Addressing Children's Needs

Administration for Children and Families

Website: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov>

Additional Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-Free (English): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Toll-Free (español): 1-888-628-9454

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

Website (English): <https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

(español): <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/en-espanol>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Website: <https://www.nctsn.org>

- Encourage children to participate in recreational activities so they can move around and play with others.
- Address your own anxiety and stress in a healthy way.
- Let children know that you care about them—spend time doing something special; make sure to check on them in a nonintrusive way.
- Maintain consistent routines, such as completing homework and playing games together.

When Children, Youth and Parents, Caregivers, or Teachers Need More Help

In some instances, children may have trouble getting past their responses to an outbreak, particularly if a loved one is living or helping with the response in an area where many people are sick. Consider arranging for the child to talk with a mental health professional to help identify the areas of difficulty. If a child has lost a loved one, consider working with someone who knows how to support children who are grieving.¹ Find a caring professional in the Helpful Resources section of this tip sheet.

1 National Commission on Children and Disasters. (2010). *National Commission on Children and Disasters: 2010 report to the President and Congress* (AHRQ Publication No. 10-MO37). Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Retrieved from <http://archive.ahrq.gov/prep/nccdreport/nccdreport.pdf> [PDF - 1.15 MB]

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SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

PEP20-01-01-006



Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health:

TIPS FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING, QUARANTINE, AND ISOLATION DURING AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK

What Is Social Distancing?

Social distancing is a way to keep people from interacting closely or frequently enough to spread an infectious disease. Schools and other gathering places such as movie theaters may close, and sports events and religious services may be cancelled.

What Is Quarantine?

Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. It lasts long enough to ensure the person has not contracted an infectious disease.

What Is Isolation?

Isolation prevents the spread of an infectious disease by separating people who are sick from those who are not. It lasts as long as the disease is contagious.

Introduction

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, local officials may require the public to take measures to limit and control the spread of the disease. This tip sheet provides information about **social distancing, quarantine, and isolation**. The government has the right to enforce federal and state laws related to public health if people

within the country get sick with highly contagious diseases that have the potential to develop into outbreaks or pandemics.

This tip sheet describes feelings and thoughts you may have during and after social distancing, quarantine, and isolation. It also suggests ways to care for your behavioral health during these experiences and provides resources for more help.

What To Expect: Typical Reactions

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations such as an infectious disease outbreak that requires social distancing, quarantine, or isolation. People may feel:

- **Anxiety, worry, or fear** related to:
 - Your own health status
 - The health status of others whom you may have exposed to the disease
 - The resentment that your friends and family may feel if they need to go into quarantine as a result of contact with you
 - The experience of monitoring yourself, or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of the disease
 - Time taken off from work and the potential loss of income and job security
 - The challenges of securing things you need, such as groceries and personal care items

- **Concern** about being able to effectively care for children or others in your care
 - **Uncertainty or frustration** about how long you will need to remain in this situation, and uncertainty about the future
 - **Loneliness** associated with feeling cut off from the world and from loved ones
 - **Anger** if you think you were exposed to the disease because of others' negligence
 - **Boredom and frustration** because you may not be able to work or engage in regular day-to-day activities
 - **Uncertainty or ambivalence** about the situation
 - **A desire to use alcohol or drugs** to cope
 - **Symptoms of depression**, such as feelings of hopelessness, changes in appetite, or sleeping too little or too much
 - **Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**, such as intrusive distressing memories, flashbacks (reliving the event), nightmares, changes in thoughts and mood, and being easily startled
- Stay up to date on what is happening, while limiting your media exposure. Avoid watching or listening to news reports 24/7 since this tends to increase anxiety and worry. Remember that children are especially affected by what they hear and see on television.
 - Look to credible sources for information on the infectious disease outbreak (see page 3 for sources of reliable outbreak-related information).

BE YOUR OWN ADVOCATE

Speaking out about your needs is particularly important if you are in quarantine, since you may not be in a hospital or other facility where your basic needs are met. Ensure you have what you need to feel safe, secure, and comfortable.

- Work with local, state, or national health officials to find out how you can arrange for groceries and toiletries to be delivered to your home as needed.
- Inform health care providers or health authorities of any needed medications and work with them to ensure that you continue to receive those medications.

If you or a loved one experience any of these reactions for 2 to 4 weeks or more, contact your health care provider or one of the resources at the end of this tip sheet.

Ways To Support Yourself During Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation

UNDERSTAND THE RISK

Consider the real risk of harm to yourself and others around you. The public perception of risk during a situation such as an infectious disease outbreak is often inaccurate. Media coverage may create the impression that people are in immediate danger when really the risk for infection may be very low. Take steps to get the facts:

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Health care providers and health authorities should provide information on the disease, its diagnosis, and treatment.

- Do not be afraid to ask questions—clear communication with a health care provider may help reduce any distress associated with social distancing, quarantine, or isolation.
- Ask for written information when available.
- Ask a family member or friend to obtain information in the event that you are unable to secure this information on your own.

WORK WITH YOUR EMPLOYER TO REDUCE FINANCIAL STRESS

If you're unable to work during this time, you may experience stress related to your job status or financial situation.

- Provide your employer with a clear explanation of why you are away from work.
- Contact the U.S. Department of Labor toll-free at 1-866-4USWAGE (1-866-487-9243) about the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows U.S. employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for serious medical conditions, or to care for a family member with a serious medical condition.
- Contact your utility providers, cable and Internet provider, and other companies from whom you get monthly bills to explain your situation and request alternative bill payment arrangements as needed.
- If approved by health authorities and your health care providers, arrange for your friends and loved ones to bring you newspapers, movies, and books.
- Sign up for emergency alerts via text or email to ensure you get updates as soon as they are available.
- Call SAMHSA's free 24-hour Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990, if you feel lonely or need support.
- Use the Internet, radio, and television to keep up with local, national, and world events.
- If you need to connect with someone because of an ongoing alcohol or drug problem, consider calling your local Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous offices.

Sources for Reliable Outbreak-Related Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
<http://www.cdc.gov>

World Health Organization

Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization
525 23rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
202-974-3000
<http://www.who.int/en>

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Reaching out to people you trust is one of the best ways to reduce anxiety, depression, loneliness, and boredom during social distancing, quarantine, and isolation. You can:

- Use the telephone, email, text messaging, and social media to connect with friends, family, and others.
- Talk “face to face” with friends and loved ones using Skype or FaceTime.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

If you are in a medical facility, you may have access to health care providers who can answer your questions. However, if you are quarantined at home, and you're worried about physical symptoms you or your loved ones may be experiencing, call your doctor or other health care provider:

- Ask your provider whether it would be possible to schedule remote appointments via Skype or FaceTime for mental health, substance use, or physical health needs.
- In the event that your doctor is unavailable and you are feeling stressed or are in crisis, call the hotline numbers listed at the end of this tip sheet for support.

USE PRACTICAL WAYS TO COPE AND RELAX

- Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate or pray, or engage in activities you enjoy.
- Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do something fun after a hard task.

- Talk about your experiences and feelings to loved ones and friends, if you find it helpful.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking; consider keeping a journal where you write down things you are grateful for or that are going well.

After Social Distancing, Quarantine, or Isolation

You may experience mixed emotions, including a sense of relief. If you were isolated because you had the illness, you may feel sadness or anger because friends and loved ones may have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious.

The best way to end this common fear is to learn about the disease and the actual risk to others. Sharing this information will often calm fears in others and allow you to reconnect with them.

If you or your loved ones experience symptoms of extreme stress—such as trouble sleeping, problems with eating too much or too little, inability to carry out routine daily activities, or using drugs or alcohol to cope—speak to a health care provider or call one of the hotlines listed to the right for a referral.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or someone else, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

Helpful Resources

Hotlines

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-985-5990 (English and español)

SMS: Text TalkWithUs to 66746

SMS (español): "Hablanos" al 66746

TTY: 1-800-846-8517

Website (English): <http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Website (español): <http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/espanol.aspx>

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and español)

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-Free (English): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Toll-Free (español): 1-888-628-9454

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

Website (English): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Website (español): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/spanish.aspx>

Treatment Locator

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

Website: <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/locator/home>

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center

Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515

Email: DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

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(2014)



Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks

What You Should Know

When you hear, read, or watch news about an outbreak of an infectious disease such as Ebola, you may feel anxious and show signs of stress—even when the outbreak affects people far from where you live and you are at low or no risk of getting sick. These signs of stress are normal, and may be more likely or pronounced in people with loved ones in parts of the world affected by the outbreak. In the wake of an infectious disease outbreak, monitor your own physical and mental health. Know the signs of stress in yourself and your loved ones. Know how to relieve stress, and know when to get help.

Know the Signs of Stress

What follows are behavioral, physical, emotional, and cognitive responses that are all common signs of anxiety and stress. You may notice some of them after you learn about an infectious disease outbreak.

YOUR BEHAVIOR:

- An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- An increase in your alcohol, tobacco use, or use of illegal drugs
- An increase in irritability, with outbursts of anger and frequent arguing
- Having trouble relaxing or sleeping
- Crying frequently
- Worrying excessively
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- Blaming other people for everything
- Having difficulty communicating or listening
- Having difficulty giving or accepting help
- Inability to feel pleasure or have fun

Know When To Get Help

You may experience serious distress when you hear about an infectious disease outbreak, even if you are at little or no risk of getting sick. If you or someone you know shows signs of stress (see list at left) for several days or weeks, get help by accessing one of the resources at the end of this tip sheet. Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline right away if you or someone you know threatens to hurt or kill him- or herself or someone else, or talks or writes about death, dying, or suicide.



YOUR BODY:

- Having stomachaches or diarrhea
- Having headaches and other pains
- Losing your appetite or eating too much
- Sweating or having chills
- Getting tremors or muscle twitches
- Being easily startled

YOUR EMOTIONS:

- Being anxious or fearful
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling angry
- Feeling heroic, euphoric, or invulnerable
- Not caring about anything
- Feeling overwhelmed by sadness

YOUR THINKING:

- Having trouble remembering things
- Feeling confused
- Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Having difficulty making decisions

Know How To Relieve Stress

You can manage and alleviate your stress by taking time to take care of yourself.

KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE:

Set limits on how much time you spend reading or watching news about the outbreak. You will want to stay up to date on news of the outbreak, particularly if you have loved ones in places where many people have gotten sick. But make sure to take time away from the news to focus on things in your life that are going well and that you can control.

GET THE FACTS:

Find people and resources you can depend on for accurate health information. Learn from them about the outbreak and how you can protect yourself against illness, if you are at risk. You may turn to your family doctor, a state or local health department, U.S. government agencies, or an international organization. Check out the sidebar on the next page for links to good sources of information about infectious disease outbreaks.

KEEP YOURSELF HEALTHY:

- Eat healthy foods, and drink water.
- Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol.
- Do not use tobacco or illegal drugs.
- Get enough sleep and rest.
- Get physical exercise.

USE PRACTICAL WAYS TO RELAX:

- Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, wash your face and hands, or engage in pleasurable hobbies.
- Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do a fun thing after a hard task.
- Use time off to relax—eat a good meal, read, listen to music, take a bath, or talk to family.
- Talk about your feelings to loved ones and friends often.



Take care of your physical health to help lower your stress. Take a break to focus on positive parts of your life, like connections with loved ones.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY, FEELINGS, AND SPIRIT:

- Recognize and heed early warning signs of stress.
- Recognize how your own past experiences affect your way of thinking and feeling about this event, and think of how you handled your thoughts, emotions, and behavior around past events.
- Know that feeling stressed, depressed, guilty, or angry is common after an event like an infectious disease outbreak, even when it does not directly threaten you.
- Connect with others who may be experiencing stress about the outbreak. Talk about your feelings about the outbreak, share reliable health information, and enjoy conversation unrelated to the outbreak, to remind yourself of the many important and positive things in your lives.
- Take time to renew your spirit through meditation, prayer, or helping others in need.

Sources for Credible Outbreak-Related Health Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
<https://www.cdc.gov>

World Health Organization

Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization
525 23rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
202-974-3000
<http://www.who.int/en>

Helpful Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
(SAMHSA)

5600 Fishers Lane

Rockville, MD 20857

Toll-Free: 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

Email: info@samhsa.hhs.gov

SAMHSA Store: https://store.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA Hotlines

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-985-5990 (English and español)

SMS: Text TalkWithUs to 66746

SMS (español): "Hablamos" al 66746

TTY: 1-800-846-8517

Website in English: https://

www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov

Website in Spanish: https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/
disaster-distress-helpline/espanol

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral
Information Service in English and español)

Website: https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-
helpline

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-Free: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

Toll-Free (español): 1-888-628-9454

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (1-800-799-4889)

Website in English: https://

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Website in Spanish: https://

suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/en-espanol

Treatment Locator

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

Website: https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/locator/home

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center

Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515

Email: DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov

Website: https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac

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How To Cope With Sheltering in Place

Introduction

Sheltering in place means people are asked by local officials to stay where they are for a period of time. You may be at your own or a relative's home, school, or work. Sheltering in place may be required because of an emergency such as a threat of violence, a weather situation such as a tornado or hurricane, or a public health situation like an infectious disease outbreak. You may hear shelter in place also referred to as a "lockdown."

This tip sheet describes reactions often associated with sheltering in place. It also suggests ways to care for yourself and your family during the experience and provides additional resources you may find helpful.

What To Expect: Typical Reactions

Sheltering in place can be stressful. If you are sheltering because of an immediate threat of violence or severe weather, your first priority is to ensure that you and those in your care are safe—lock the doors, stay away from windows, and stay in interior rooms if possible.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. Typical reactions to sheltering in place because of an immediate problem include:

- Anxiety about the situation
- Fear and worry about your own safety and that of your loved ones from whom you may be temporarily separated
- Concern about being able to effectively care for children or others in your care

- Uncertainty, anger, or frustration about how long you will need to remain sheltered, and uncertainty about what is going to happen

In shelter in place situations lasting longer than a few hours, you may also experience:

- Feelings of isolation, loneliness, sadness, or boredom
- Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties
- Fear over loss of income
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns

Ways To Cope During Sheltering in Place

UNDERSTAND THE RISK

Consider the real risk of harm to yourself and others around you. For example, during a situation such as an infectious disease outbreak, the public perception of risk is often inaccurate. Media coverage may create the impression that people are in immediate danger when really the risk for infection may be very low. Take steps to get the facts:

- Stay up to date on what is happening, but avoid watching or listening to news reports 24/7 since this can increase anxiety and worry. Remember that children are especially affected by what they hear and see on television.
- Look to credible sources for information about the situation.

MAKE A PLAN

You can prepare in advance for a potential shelter in place in the following ways:

- Assemble an emergency supplies kit that includes at least 2 weeks' worth of water and shelf-stable food, medications, pet food, flashlights, and extra batteries.
- Ask your employer and your children's school administrators or daycare providers what their plan is for a shelter in place order.
- If you need ongoing medical care for a chronic health, mental health, or substance use condition, learn in advance what to do from your health care or treatment provider in the event that you cannot come to the office or clinic.



- Develop an emergency plan with family members that includes having each other's contact information and ensuring that all members will check in with one another as soon as possible if you are not sheltering in place together.
- Collect fun activities, books, games, and toys that can keep your children entertained, and books, movies, and games that will keep you occupied.

USE PRACTICAL WAYS TO COPE AND RELAX

You can do many things to keep yourself calm while sheltering in place.

- Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate or pray, wash your face and hands, or engage in pleasurable hobbies.
- Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do something fun after a hard task.



- Do activities you enjoy—eat a good meal, read, listen to music, take a bath, or talk to family.
- Talk about your experiences and feelings to loved ones and friends as often as possible, if you find it helpful.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking; consider keeping a journal where you write down things you are grateful for or that are going well.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

STAY CONNECTED

Staying connected with family, friends, and others you trust is one of the most helpful ways to cope with any stressful situation. Because of advances in technology, it's possible to connect with others during a shelter in place situation. You can:

- Take advantage of current technology such as Skype or FaceTime to talk “face to face” with friends and loved ones.



- Check in with people regularly using text messaging.
- Plug into social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to gain insight into what is going on in the world—just be sure that sources you follow are credible and avoid sites that produce stress or worry.
- Sign up for emergency alerts via text or email to ensure you get updates as soon as they're available.
- Call SAMHSA's free 24-hour Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990, if you feel lonely or need support.

- If you need to connect with someone because of an ongoing alcohol or drug problem, consider calling your local Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous offices.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTORS ABOUT TELEHEALTH

Many health care providers can now interact with patients via Skype, FaceTime, or email. In an emergency requiring sheltering in place for several days or longer, such as an infectious disease outbreak:

- Ask your provider whether it would be possible to schedule remote appointments for mental health, substance use, or physical health needs.



- If you're worried about physical symptoms you or your loved ones may be experiencing, call your doctor or other health care provider.
- In the event that your doctor is unavailable during shelter in place and you are feeling stressed or are in crisis, call the hotline numbers listed at the end of this tip sheet for support.

What To Expect: After the “All Clear”

After a shelter in place order is lifted, most people will be able to resume normal activities. Some people, including children, may have a hard time getting back to usual routines. To support children:

- Explain that the danger is over and the situation was not their fault.
- Try to get back to normal routines and activities as soon as possible.
- Encourage them to talk or write about their feelings, but don't pressure them.



If you or your loved ones experience symptoms of extreme stress—such as trouble sleeping, problems with eating too much or too little, inability to carry out routine daily activities, or use of drugs or alcohol to cope—speak to a health care provider or call one of the hotlines listed at right for a referral.

Helpful Resources

Hotlines

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-985-5990 (English and español)

SMS: Text TalkWithUs to 66746

SMS (español): “Hablanos” al 66746

TTY: 1-800-846-8517

Website (English): <http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Website (español): <http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/espanol.aspx>

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and español)

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-Free (English): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Toll-Free (español): 1-888-628-9454

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

Website (English): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Website (español): <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/spanish.aspx>

Treatment Locator

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

Website: <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/locator/home>

SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center

Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515

Email: DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

**Note: Inclusion or mention of a resource in this fact sheet does not imply endorsement by the Center for Mental Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*



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(2014)

Disaster Distress Helpline

PHONE: 1-800-985-5990
TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746

Disaster Distress Helpline

PHONE: 1-800-985-5990 TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746

**Call 1-800-985-5990
or text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746**
to get help and support
for any distress that you or someone
you care about may be feeling
related to any disaster.

The **Helpline** and **Text Service** are:

- Available 24 hours a day,
7 days a week, year-round
- Free (standard data/text messaging
rates may apply for the texting service)
- Answered by trained crisis counselors.

TTY for Deaf / Hearing Impaired:
1-800-846-8517

Spanish-speakers:
Text "Hablanos" to 66746

Disaster Distress Helpline

PHONE: 1-800-985-5990
TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746

**If you or someone you
know is struggling
after a disaster,
you are not alone.**



*"Ever since the tornado,
I haven't been able to get a full
night's sleep ..."*

*"I can't get the sounds of
the gunshots out of my mind..."*

*"Things haven't been the same
since my shop was flooded ..."*

 **Call us:**
1-800-985-5990

 **Text:**
'TalkWithUs' to 66746

 **Visit:**
<http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

 **Like us on
Facebook:**
[http://facebook.com/
distresshelpline](http://facebook.com/distresshelpline)

 **Follow us on
Twitter (@distressline):**
<http://twitter.com/distressline>



Administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Dept. of Health
and Human Services (HHS).

Talk With Us!

Disaster Distress Helpline

PHONE: 1-800-985-5990 TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746

Disasters have the potential to cause *emotional distress*.

Some are more at risk than others:

- Survivors living or working in the impacted areas (youth & adults)
- Loved ones of victims
- First Responders, Rescue & Recovery Workers.

Stress, anxiety, and depression are common reactions after a disaster.

Warning signs of distress may include:

- Sleeping too much or too little
- Stomachaches or headaches
- Anger, feeling edgy or lashing out at others
- Overwhelming sadness
- Worrying a lot of the time; feeling guilty but not sure why
- Feeling like you have to keep busy
- Lack of energy or always feeling tired
- Drinking alcohol, smoking or using tobacco more than usual; using illegal drugs
- Eating too much or too little
- Not connecting with others
- Feeling like you won't ever be happy again.

TIPS FOR COPING WITH STRESS AFTER A DISASTER:

Take care of yourself. Try to eat healthy, avoid using alcohol and drugs, and get some exercise when you can- even a walk around the block can make a difference.

Reach out to friends and family. Talk to someone you trust about how you are doing.

Talk to your children. They may feel scared, angry, sad, worried, and confused. Let them know it's okay to talk about what's on their mind. Limit their watching of TV news reports about the disaster. Help children and teens maintain normal routines to the extent possible. Role model healthy coping.

Get enough 'good' sleep. Some people have trouble falling asleep after a disaster, others keep waking up during the night.

If you have trouble sleeping:

- Only go to bed when you are ready to sleep
- Don't watch TV or use your cell phone or laptop computer while you're in bed
- Avoid eating (especially sugar) or drinking caffeine or alcohol at least one hour before going to bed
- If you wake up and can't fall back to sleep, try writing in a journal or on a sheet of paper what's on your mind.

Take care of pets or get outside into nature when it's safe. Nature and animals can help us to feel better when we are down. See if you can volunteer at a local animal shelter- they may need help after a disaster. Once it's safe to return to public parks or natural areas, find a quiet spot to sit in or go for a hike.



Know when to ask for help. Signs of stress can be normal, short-term reactions to any of life's unexpected events- not only after surviving a disaster, but also after a death in the family, the loss of a job, or a breakup.

It's important to pay attention to what's going on with you or with someone you care about, because what may seem like "everyday stress" can actually be:

- Depression (including having thoughts of suicide)
- Anxiety
- Alcohol or Drug Abuse.

If you or someone you know may be depressed, suffering from overwhelming feelings of anxiety, or possibly abusing alcohol or drugs ...

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746.

You Are Not Alone.



Tips for Disaster Responders: **IDENTIFYING SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN THE RESPONDER COMMUNITY**

A prepared responder workforce is a substance-free workforce.

Disaster response work often occurs in disturbing settings that may include gruesome images, frightening sounds, and life-threatening situations. Despite the distressing environment, disaster responders are able to engage in this work because they:

- Are highly trained.
- Work well in structured settings.
- Possess a shared sense of mission.
- Have a strong group identity.
- Function well under stress.
- Rely on the predictable performance of peers for everyone's safety.

However, sometimes the disturbing scenarios may also remind responders of other distressing events, and such memories can contribute to relapse for those in recovery. All of these factors can create a higher-than-average risk for misusing substances such as alcohol, illegal drugs, and prescription medication. Some disaster responders use substances as a way to help forget their experiences. Others use them to numb their emotional pain and escape the intensity of these situations. Substance misuse can compromise the effectiveness of the response work.

Traditionally, disaster responders have been identified as law enforcement personnel, firefighters, emergency management personnel, and paramedics. The definition has recently been broadened to include disaster mental health and substance abuse professionals, faith-based representatives, and other community volunteers.

The goal of this tip sheet is to provide you with information on the warning signs of misusing alcohol, prescription medication, or other substances. Knowing these signs can help you identify problems, provide support, and even prevent the development of these problems in yourself, a friend, or a coworker.

Indicators of Possible Substance Misuse: What Do You Notice in Yourself, a Friend, or a Coworker?

This list can help you increase your awareness of how substance misuse may affect both your personal and professional life. It is not a clinical assessment.



PHYSICAL/EMOTIONAL INDICATORS

- Tremors (e.g., shaking or twitching of hands or eyelids)
- The smell of alcohol on the breath or marijuana on clothing
- Burned fingers or lips, needle marks on arms
- Slurred speech or incoherence
- Hyperactivity, too much energy (e.g., appearing anxious)
- Lethargy, falling asleep easily
- Impaired coordination or unsteady gait (e.g., staggering, off balance)
- Wide mood swings (e.g., overactive, very talkative and then alternately withdrawn or isolative)
- Often fearful for no apparent reason
- Increasingly angry or defiant
- Bloodshot eyes
- Frequent nosebleeds possibly related to snorted drugs
- A decline in hygiene or attention to personal tasks
- Abnormally slow movements or slower reaction time

SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

- Uses alcohol or other substances more than intended or more frequently.
- Experiences increased strain in relationships (e.g., family, professional).
- Isolates self from peers, friends, and family, as well as from routine activities.
- Is unsuccessful in efforts to cut down or control substance misuse.
- Needs more of the substance to get the same feeling (i.e., has an increased tolerance for the substance).
- Does not maintain obligations at work, school, or home because of substance misuse.
- Talks regularly about getting high.
- Spends a great deal of time and money trying to obtain the substance.
- Misuses sick leave to recover from substance misuse.
- Expends energy on denying, lying about, or covering up substance misuse.
- Continues misuse despite associated problems.
- Experiences recurrent substance-related legal problems (e.g., stopped for driving under the influence or involved in domestic incidents).

COGNITIVE/MENTAL INDICATORS

- Experiences blackouts, or has difficulty remembering events that occurred while under the influence.
- Has difficulty making decisions, concentrating, or attending to a task.
- Has short-term memory loss.

- Has difficulty following instructions on the scene or in the office.
- Needs repeated assistance with completing ordinary paperwork.

When To Seek Help

If you have decided to seek help for yourself, congratulations! You have accomplished one of the most difficult steps in the process. If you are considering taking action to help someone else, remember that person may seek to protect his or her behaviors and hide his or her use pattern. Keep in mind that when seeking help for either yourself or someone else, you may experience challenges along the path to recovery. The stigma attached to seeking help for substance misuse, especially in the first responder community, can be difficult to bear. Some may feel concerned about the effect that seeking help may have on their career. Often people feel that help will not work, that their identity might not be kept confidential, or even that they do not deserve help. The good news is that many people who seek help for a substance misuse problem succeed and go on to live healthy and productive lives. Taking action may be your opportunity to make the difference in your own life or in the life of someone you care about.

If you are thinking about your own path to recovery, consider the following:

- Think about telling someone you trust, who understands and will support you through this effort. It is also a good idea to let those close to you know what you are going through and to tell them how they can help.
- Consider reaching out to a faith leader, mentor, or someone else who has helped you in the past and enlisting this person for support.



- Find new ways to manage stress, such as with exercise, stretching, deep breathing, acupuncture, massage, and connections with trusted friends and family members.
- Look for local programs and providers. Groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Al-Anon are free of charge and offer confidential assistance several times per week.

If you are trying to help a friend or coworker, you may want to do the following:

- Express your concern directly to your friend or coworker when he or she is not under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Emphasize to your friend how much you care, and remind the person that he or she is not alone. Offer to accompany your friend to a recovery meeting or to help find other assistance. If you have tried speaking with your coworker and he or she is not receptive, consider talking with your team leader or supervisor about your concerns. Chances are, your supervisor is already aware of the situation and can take the necessary steps to get the person the help he or she needs and deserves.
- Consider arranging for a strategic intervention. This may involve several other people and should be coordinated by an experienced substance abuse professional.

Helpful Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
Administration Disaster Technical Assistance Center
(SAMHSA DTAC)

Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

SAMHSA's National Recovery Month

Website: <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>

SAMHSA Behavioral Health Disaster Response Mobile App

Website: <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/PEP13-DKAPP-1>

National Institute on Drug Abuse*

Website: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/seeking-drug-abuse-treatment>

Federal Employee Assistance Program*

Toll-Free: 1-800-222-0364

TTY: 1-888-262-7848

Website: <http://foh.hhs.gov/services/EAP/EAP.asp>

Treatment Locators

Mental Health Treatment Facility Locator

Toll-Free: 1-800-789-2647 (English and español)

TDD: 1-866-889-2647

Website: <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/MHTreatmentLocator>

MentalHealth.gov

Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.gov>

MentalHealth.gov provides U.S. government information and resources on mental health.

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)

(24/7 English and español); TDD: 1-800-487-4889

Website: <http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-Free: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (1-800-799-4889)

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov>

This resource can be found by accessing the Suicide Prevention Lifeline box once on the SAMHSA website.

Workplace Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-WORKPLACE (1-800-967-5752)

Website: <http://www.workplace.samhsa.gov>

*Note: Inclusion of a resource in this fact sheet does not imply endorsement by the Center for Mental Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The worst thing you can do is nothing. Most people who misuse substances are not able to stop without support from others. Take the first step to help yourself, a friend, or a coworker.

Many peer recovery and support programs are available. Some responder organizations have Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that focus specifically on substance misuse. Start by checking for your company's EAP, or if you know a trusted health, mental health, or substance abuse counselor, you may want to contact him or her for help. You can also download the SAMHSA Behavioral Health Disaster Response Mobile App and access a directory of behavioral health service providers in your area. You might also try the treatment locators, hotlines, and other resources that are listed in the **Helpful Resources** section on this page.

If you or someone you know is struggling after a disaster, you are not alone.

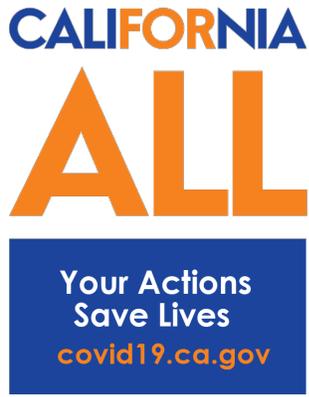
Disaster
Distress
Helpline

PHONE: 1-800-985-5990
TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746
WEB: <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746 to get help and support 24/7.



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(Revised 2014; previously NMH05-0212)



California Surgeon General's Playbook: Stress Relief for Caregivers and Kids during COVID-19

NAVIGATING STRESS MANAGEMENT WITH KIDS

Many of us are feeling a lot of stress right now. Even for adults, it can be tough to recognize that what we feel as irritability, difficulty focusing, insomnia or changes in appetite can actually be signs that our bodies are feeling the effects of stress. For kids, no matter the age, their brains and bodies are even more vulnerable to the harmful effects of stress than adults, and most often, they aren't able to recognize or verbalize it. Stress in kids may show up differently than our stress as adults does. This Stress-Busting Playbook can help you understand what to look out for and what you can do to protect your family's health.

Some of the changes happening as a result of the COVID-19 such as frequent worrisome news reports, school closures, not being able to see friends and loved ones can be disruptive and even downright scary for kids. They may have worries about their own health or the health of those they love, such as a grandparent. Or they may feel upset about missing a special event such as a birthday party, music recital, team sports or a planned trip or camp. During this time your child's body may be making more stress hormones than is healthy (or less stress hormones in the case of kids who have a history of major adversity). Prolonged exposure to high doses of stress, can lead to problems with a child's physical and/or mental health, such as asthma, poor growth, depression, or behavior problems. The good news is there are simple things you can do every day, at home, to help regulate your child's stress response system and buffer the negative impacts of stress, keeping them healthy and on the right developmental track.

It may be helpful to remember that the most important ingredient for healthy kids is a healthy caregiver. Kids are wired to be tuned in to emotional signals from their caregivers, so our kids pick up on our energy, especially now when we are all remaining at home together. So while you work to navigate the new normal, perhaps applying for public benefits or working from home while taking care of your kids and family, it is just as important to follow the stress-busting strategies for yourself. Remember to put on your own oxygen mask first, so you can be there to be available for your kids. Review the Californian Surgeon General's [Playbook: Stress Relief during COVID-19 for tips on your own self-care](#) during this time.

Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments in which children feel safe emotionally and physically can protect children's brains and bodies from the harmful effects of stress. You can help your child be healthier by managing your own stress response and helping your child do the same. Healthy nutrition, regular exercise, restful sleep, practicing mindfulness, building social supports, and getting mental health care can help to decrease stress hormones and prevent health problems.

None of this is easy right now and it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Remember your network can still help even when you're apart. So reach out to your schools, friends, family, faith community and neighbors to see what is working in their homes right now and share what's working in yours. Talking to someone you trust is a great way to reduce your stress and stay connected even when we are physically apart.

Start with the basics of routine and then take it step by step to build a program that works for you and your family. Please be kind to yourself. We are all adjusting to a new situation together and that transition is going to take some time.

KEEPING AN EYE OUT FOR STRESS IN KIDS

Many of us are feeling a lot of stress right now. As adults we may be able to recognize and say “wow, I’m stressed out.” For kids, no matter the age, they may not necessarily recognize it, verbalize it and it may not show up in the same way that our stress as adults does.

During challenging times, our bodies may make more stress hormones than usual. This can show up differently for different people. Babies may have differences in the sleeping and eating patterns. Toddlers and preschoolers may go back on a developmental milestones they had already achieved (like sleeping through the night or bedwetting).

One of the most common ways stress shows itself in school-aged kids is changes in their behavior. They may be a bit more irritable, bouncing off the walls, expressing boredom, or having a hard time managing their impulses, paying attention or focusing, or new behaviors may arise. Teenagers and adolescents may become more withdrawn.

However, many kids may show no behavioral symptoms at all. For some kids, increased stress hormones may show up as headaches, tummy aches, difficulty sleeping or worsening health issues like asthma, eczema or more frequent infections. In teenagers, you might see more risk-taking behaviors like using substances such as tobacco and marijuana (including vaping), alcohol or other substances as well as increased interest in sexual contact. Girls may also see changes in the timing or duration of their menstrual period.

It’s helpful to keep in mind that these changes aren’t “just in their heads.” Increased stress leads to biological changes in our brains and bodies that can affect kids’ health, behavior and development. The good news is there are simple things you can do every day, at home, to help regulate your child’s stress response system and buffer the negative impacts of stress, keeping them healthy and on the right developmental track.

If your child has asthma, diabetes or another health condition, it is important to be monitoring that condition more closely during times of stress. Many chronic illnesses are worsened by stress, so building a routine that practices the six stress-busting strategies below can help to combat the impact of the increase in stress hormones.

STRESS-BUSTING FOR KIDS

STEP 1: TALK ABOUT WHAT’S GOING ON

- No matter the age, uncertainty can create anxiety. As parents and caregivers, it’s important to talk to children about emergency situations in age-appropriate language and approach the discussion in a calm and sensitive way to help them cope.
- Starting the conversation can be the hardest part. One tip to make it easier is to start by asking what they have heard about coronavirus and if they have any questions or fears.
- Take some time to correct any misinformation and share age-appropriate, honest facts.
- Follow up these details by focusing on the things we can control to help us stay healthy and help other people stay healthy - proper handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, disinfecting surfaces, and physical distancing and wearing masks when we are outside and around other people for essential reasons.
- Help them understand why they are not able to see their friends, grandparents, teachers or other loved ones in-person right now — because staying at home helps keep everyone healthy right now while we fight the coronavirus.

- You can empower them with a sense of purpose by letting them know that, even though it's kind of a pain (or *especially* because it is kind of a pain), their actions are protecting the most vulnerable that could get sick. Express how proud you are of your kids for being part of the solution.

STEP 2: KEEP KIDS CONNECTED TO THEIR NETWORKS

- Social supports are a vital part of kids' development and mitigating the negative impacts of stress. Finding ways to keep your kids connected to their friends, cousins, teachers, grandparents, coaches, aunts, uncles, and so on, is critical.
- Video chat play dates, write letters to send, text silly pictures back and forth, video messages, whatever works – but helping kids stay connected to their networks is as important for them as it is for you.

STEP 3: BUILD A ROUTINE FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

- During times of uncertainty, it is especially important to stick with normal routines – predictability and structure help kids self-regulate.
- Share the schedule with the kids, as this helps to reduce anxiety, fear of boredom and reduce challenging behaviors as you move throughout the day. With older kids and adolescents, it's great to build the schedule with them so they have a sense of control and self-determination.
- Your schedule should include set wake up and bedtimes, regular meals (including snacks), quiet time for schoolwork and reading as well as regular movement and exercise.
 - o As you make your plan, make sure elements of the six stress-busting strategies are included to help regulate the stress response system. The six strategies are:
 - Supportive relationships – stay connected to our communities
 - Exercise – 60 minutes a day (doesn't have to be all at once)
 - Healthy Sleep – practice good sleep hygiene including going to bed and waking up at the same time each day.
 - Nutrition
 - Mental and Behavioral Health Support
 - Mindfulness — like meditation or prayer
- Keeping regular hygiene – shower, brush teeth, getting dressed in clean clothes – are also important for health and well-being.
- It is important to remember, especially if you are working from home, that play is an important part of kid's "job". We shouldn't expect kids to be focused on learning tasks 8 hours per day. Opportunities for exercise, creativity and play are critical for behavior, learning, and development throughout the day.
- If you are able to go outside, do so and get everyone's bodies moving. It's great for everyone's physical health and mental health too. Remember to keep physical distancing practices of at least 6 feet from others.
- Included in this playbook is a "Self-Care Template for Kids" that can help you start building your program.

STEP 4: KEEP TO YOUR ROUTINE

- Start your scheduled routine. Keep an open mind about what is working, what isn't and what is realistic for you and your family. It might be helpful to take notes or keep a journal of what works for you.
- Check in with your kids (and yourself!) regularly to see how it's going.
- Not every moment of every day needs to be scheduled, so take a moment to reflect on your program and how it's working for your family. If you need to change things about it, go ahead and do so. Let your plan evolve to ensure it is working for you. If it's not, feel free to change it up, but ensure elements from the six stress-busting strategies remain.

Six Stress-Busting Strategies For Kids

Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments in which children feel safe emotionally and physically can protect children's brains and bodies from the harmful effects of stress. You can help your child be healthier by managing your own stress response and helping your child do the same. Healthy nutrition, regular exercise, restful sleep, practicing mindfulness, building social supports, and getting mental health care can help to decrease stress hormones and prevent health problems.



1. SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

- a. Double down on supportive relationships within your household and help your kids maintain connections with friends and loved ones outside of the home by phone, video chat, old-fashioned letter writing or age-appropriate social media. Turn off media and devices for high-quality time together making art, dancing, cooking or reading at home. Remain in touch with mentors, friends, and family by phone or video chat, including schools and community- or faith-based organizations.

2. EXERCISE DAILY:

- a. Engage in 60 minutes of physical activity every day. It doesn't have to be all at one time. Dance party in your bedroom, 35 jumping jacks here and there, 20 minute hula hooping contest, film a TikTok and share it out, power walk around the block twice, running, bedtime yoga, 10 pushups, do some double dutch jump rope, the list can go on and on. Bottom line – get your and your kids' bodies moving and heart rates up to burn off stress.

3. HEALTHY SLEEP:

- a. Get sufficient, high-quality sleep. This may be particularly hard right now, but things that help are going to sleep and waking up at the same time each day.
- b. Making a routine of reading a book to or with kids before bed.
- c. Create a calm place for sleep that is cool, quiet and free of distractions
- d. Turn off electronics at least a half hour before bed.

- e. Limit food and beverages containing caffeine, like soda and chocolate.

4. NUTRITION:

- a. This is not about losing weight. This is about ensuring you are getting proper nutrition to help combat stress. Keep regular mealtimes, includes snacks for kids. Minimize refined carbohydrates, high-fat, high-sugar foods and reduce your alcohol intake.
- b. General rule of thumb includes 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day and foods rich in omega-3-fatty acids, including fish, nuts and fiber.

5. MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUPPORT:

- a. Engage in mental health care for yourself and/or for your child.
- b. Minimize the amount of exposure/consumption of news or other media content that feels upsetting for both you and your child.
- c. If your child currently sees a mental health professional, ask that those sessions can continue via video or phone sessions for psychotherapy, psychiatric care or substance use treatment. There are new laws to support your provider to do phone and video visits.
- d. Keep your own mental health appointments via video or phone calls, as well.
- e. Have open conversations as a family about emotional and mental health
- f. If you do not have a regular mental health professional, here are some resources to help you get started [Insert links]
- g. If you are feeling like you or your child is in crisis [you can get help here](#).

6. MINDFULNESS, MEDITATION, PRAYER:

- a. Practice mindfulness, such as meditation, yoga, or prayer for 20 minutes, two times a day. Apps like Headspace and Calm are easy, accessible ways to get started. Meditations can be found online, as well. Both have specialty programs for kids of all ages.
- b. Mindfulness can help strengthen the brain pathways that actively buffer the stress response, helping you regulate body more easily.
- c. Take moments throughout the day with kids to notice and talk about how we're feeling, both physically and emotionally
- d. Talk about, write out or draw five or more things we are all grateful for each day

SOME ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

To combat stress, creating an outlet where kids can put their energy is incredibly helpful. Outlets like exercise, artwork, play and creativity are helpful here. Your stress-busting routine is the solution to help get everyone back on track. And, as always, addressing that there is something different and asking your child how they are feeling and checking in on what's going on is key.

A few additional reminders:

- Quality-Time Together - This increase in family time may be a window of opportunity to spend more time together. So look for positives in solidifying family cohesion if you can.
- Play – Finding ways to play and laugh is super important for our mental and physical health. Turn off the news and watch a silly movie, call a friend and talk about times you laughed the hardest, figure out what impressions you can do, play the floor is lava. Remember that part of kids' "jobs" is play. This is a task that is something kids need for their development. These are serious times, but you can still be silly. It will be good for everyone.

- Adjusting our expectations – We recognize this is temporary and that during this time we may not be as productive as we had hoped every day. That is OK. Caregivers are balancing household responsibilities, ensuring your kids are doing their distance learning and work stress and more. All of these things can be incredibly intense. Give yourself permission to let go of judgement that you aren't doing it "right" or doing enough. Do the best you can to work the program you develop to minimize stress for you and your kids right now.
- Asking for help or take a moment – open up the communication in your house about times when we need help. Whether you have a special code word or just the reminder to yourself. If you need a moment, communicate it and take the moment. If you are having a really hard time, that's normal and unfortunately right now, expected. [Services and numbers you can call for support are here.](#)

SELF-CARE TEMPLATE FOR KIDS

During this time your child's body may be making more or less stress hormones than is healthy. This can lead to problems with a child's physical and/or mental health, such as asthma, poor growth, depression, or behavior problems. Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments where children feel safe emotionally and physically can protect children's brains and bodies from the harmful effects of stress. You can help your child be healthier by managing your own stress response and helping your child do the same. Healthy nutrition, regular exercise, restful sleep, practicing mindfulness, building social supports, and getting mental health support can help to decrease stress hormones and prevent health problems.

Here are some goals your family can set together to support your child's health. *[Check the goals that you are choosing or write in others that will work for you and your family in each category!]*

- Supportive relationships.** We've set a goal of...
 - Using respectful communication even when we are upset or angry
 - Spending more high-quality time together as a family, such as:
 - Having regular family meals together
 - Having regular "no electronics" time for us to talk and/or play together
 - Talking, reading, and/or singing together every day
 - Making time for me and my kids to call or video chat with friends and family to maintain healthy support systems for myself and our family
 - Connecting regularly with members of our community to build social supports
 - Asking for help if a relationship or environment feels physically or emotionally unsafe
 - The National Domestic Violence hotline is **800-799-SAFE (7233)**
 - The National Sexual Assault hotline is **800-656-HOPE (4673)**
 - To reach a crisis text line, **text HOME to 741-741**
 - Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: You can call 1-800-4-A-CHILD
 - Create your own goal: _____

- Exercise.** We've set a goal of...
 - Limiting screen time to less than one hour per day
 - Walking at least 20 minutes every day

- Finding a type of exercise that we enjoy and doing it together as a family. Examples include long walks, dancing, sports (shooting hoops, playing catch, etc.), hula hooping, jump rope, running, jumping jacks, push-ups and sit ups, yoga, or Zumba.
- Getting my child involved in physical activities like sports, dance, or other form of regular exercise – while still practicing physical/social distancing
- Create your own goal: _____

Nutrition. We've set a goal of...

- Eating a healthy breakfast daily (with protein, whole grains, and/or fruit)
- Drinking water instead of juice or soda
- Eating at least 5 vegetables and/or fruits every day
- Choosing whole wheat bread and brown rice instead of white bread or rice
- Limiting high sugar and/or high fat foods
- Create your own goal: _____

Sleep. We've set a goal of...

- Turning off screens 30 minutes before bedtime
- Helping my child go to bed at the same time every night
- Making a routine of reading a book to my child before bed (or, if older, letting my child read to me)
- Creating a calm place for sleep
- Using mindfulness or other stress reduction tools if worry is keeping my child up at night
- Create your own goal: _____

Mindfulness. We've set a goal of...

- Taking moments throughout the day to notice how we're feeling, both physically and emotionally
- Talking about or writing out a list of five or more things we are all grateful for each day
- Practicing mindful breathing or other calming technique(s) during stressful situations
- Creating a regular routine of prayer, meditation, and/or yoga
- Downloading a mindfulness app and doing a mindfulness activity every day
- Create your own goal: _____

Mental health. We've set a goal of...

- Having a conversation as a family about emotional and mental health
- Learning more about mental health treatment options (e.g., counseling, therapy, psychiatric services)
- Identifying a local mental health professional
- Scheduling an appointment with a mental health professional or keeping regular appointments
- If I am feeling like I or my child is in crisis, I will get help
 - The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is **800-273-TALK (8255)**
 - To reach a crisis text line, **text HOME to 741-741**
 - SAMHSA Disaster Distress Line **800-985-5990**
- Create your own goal: _____

Remember, the most important ingredient for healthy kids is a healthy caregiver. Here are some other goals that you can set for yourself to help your whole family be healthier.

Self-Care. I've set a goal of...

- Making a plan for what to do when I'm feeling stressed out, angry, or overwhelmed
- Planning with my partner, friends, or family to get the support I need
- Seeking help if I am not emotionally or physically safe
- Making regular video or phone appointments with my mental or behavioral health provider(s)
- Identifying my strengths and learning more about building resilience
- Calling **211** if I need help meeting basic needs such as food and shelter
- National Parent Helpline: Call 1-855-427-2736
- Create your own goal: _____

For more information, please visit:

For resources related to COVID-19, <https://covid19.ca.gov/>

From **First 5 California**: <http://www.first5california.com/>

From the **American Academy of Pediatrics**: <https://www.healthychildren.org/>



California Surgeon General's Playbook: Stress Relief during COVID-19

IMPORTANCE OF STRESS MANAGEMENT DURING THIS TIME

The health and safety of our nearly 40 million Californians is the number-one priority for our state. This includes the physical and psychological well-being of all individuals. We are mindful that the public health policies and interventions necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19 are affecting all facets of society and our daily lives. These daily disruptions, coupled with the fear of not knowing what may come, are resulting in increased stress and anxiety for many.

Californians have come together to practice physical distancing to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. While we take action to lessen the immediate impacts of COVID-19 on our communities and our health care systems, it is also important to minimize the secondary health effects of this pandemic. Widespread stress and anxiety regarding COVID-19, compounded by the economic distress due to lost wages, employment and financial assets; mass school closures; and necessary physical distancing measures can result in an increase of stress-related health conditions.

During this time, your body may be making more or less stress hormones than is healthy. This can lead to worsening of physical and/or mental health problems, such as diabetes, heart disease, anxiety, depression, smoking, or unhealthy use of alcohol or other drugs.

Stress can show up in our bodies, emotions and behavior in many different ways. For example in our bodies - changes to sleep patterns and appetite, headaches, stomach aches, or bowel changes, and spikes in blood pressure may all be signs of an overactive stress response. In our emotions and behavior - we may feel more irritable, experience mood changes, anxiety, depression, increased substance use, or anger. It's important to know that these changes aren't "just in your head". They may be signs of a biological reaction occurring in our brains and bodies due to the collective stress we are all under. If you have experienced significant adversity in the past, especially during the critical years of childhood, you may be at higher risk of experiencing health and behavioral problems during times of stress.

The good news is there are simple things you can do every day, at home, to protect your health. The following guide can help you manage your stress response. They may seem simple at first, but they are evidence-based and demonstrated to be effective. Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships can protect our brains and bodies from the harmful effects of stress and adversity. Healthy nutrition, regular exercise, restful sleep, practicing mindfulness, staying connected to our social supports, and getting mental health care can help decrease stress hormones and improve health.

Take your time, build a program that works for you and be kind to yourself, as we all move through this challenge together.

Stress Busting At Home

STEP 1: AWARENESS – HOW IS STRESS SHOWING UP IN OUR OWN BODY

- First, we must all check-in with ourselves and recognize how stress shows up in our bodies. Changes to your sleep patterns or appetite, headaches or bowel changes, spikes in blood pressure or blood sugar are all signs of an overactive stress response.
- If you have a chronic illness or existing condition, you need to pay particular attention to your condition and ensure you are tracking any significant changes. Stress management is of utmost importance to help manage your condition.

- Stress can impact our health quite intensely. For example, if you have asthma you may find yourself reaching for the albuterol more often, if you're diabetic your blood sugars may be running high, if you're managing blood pressure fluctuations, they may be running high right now.

STEP 2: MAKE A PLAN FOR YOU

- Making a plan that works for you that is realistic about what you can/will do is important.
- Think about what usually works for you when you're feeling stressed and make a list.
- As you make your plan, make sure elements of the six categories of stress management to help regulate your stress response system are included. The six categories are:
 1. Supportive relationships – stay connected to our communities
 2. Exercise – 60 minutes a day (doesn't have to be all at once)
 3. Healthy Sleep – practice good sleep hygiene including going to bed and waking up at the same time each day, and ensuring that your place of sleep is cool, quiet and free of distractions. Avoid caffeine in the afternoon or evening.
 4. Nutrition
 5. Mental and Behavioral Health Support
 6. Mindfulness — like meditation or prayer
- Included in this playbook are "Self-Care Templates" that can help you start building your program.

STEP 3: WORK YOUR PROGRAM

- Make sure you're practicing your program every day and twice a day if you need to.
- Check in with yourself regularly to see how you're feeling – emotionally and physically. Ask yourself the questions – how does my chest feel, my stomach, my legs, my head, etc.
- Analyze your program. If you need to change things about it, go ahead and do so. Let your plan evolve to ensure it is working for you. If it's not, change specifics up, but ensure elements from the six categories remain.

The Six Stress-Busting Strategies

Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships can protect our brains and bodies from the harmful effects of stress and adversity. Healthy nutrition, regular exercise, restful sleep, practicing mindfulness, staying connected to our social supports, and getting mental health care can help decrease stress hormones and improve health.



1. SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

- a. Maintain your supportive relationships virtually or with those you are at home with. Turn off media and devices for high-quality time together making art, dancing, cooking or reading with loved ones. Remain in touch with mentors, friends, and family by phone or video chat, including schools and community- or faith-based organizations.

2. EXERCISE DAILY:

- a. Engage in 60 minutes of physical activity every day. It doesn't have to be all at one time. Dance party in your bedroom, 35 jumping jacks here and there, 20 minute hula hooping contest, film a TikTok and share it out, power walk around the block twice, running, bedtime yoga, 10 pushups, do some double dutch jump rope, the list can go on and on. Bottom line – get your body moving and your heart rate up to burn off stress.
- b. Ask friends what resources they have been using or get online and search for at home work-out routines and see what comes up and what can work for you.

3. HEALTHY SLEEP:

- a. Get sufficient, high-quality sleep. This may be particularly hard right now, but things that help are going to sleep and waking up at the same time each day. Turn off electronics at least a half hour before bed. Drink some warm water or hot tea and read a book after you climb into bed. Avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening. Ensure your place of sleep is cool, quiet and free of distractions and devices.

4. NUTRITION:

- a. This is not about losing weight. This is about ensuring you are getting proper nutrition to help combat stress. Keep regular mealtimes, so you aren't just snacking all day. Minimize refined carbohydrates, high fat, high sugar foods and reduce your alcohol intake.
- b. General rule of thumb includes 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day and foods rich in omega-3-fatty acids, including fish, nuts and fiber.

5. MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUPPORT:

- a. Engage in mental health care. Schedule video or phone sessions for psychotherapy, psychiatric care and substance use disorder treatment when possible.
- b. Minimize consumption of news or other media content that feels upsetting.
- c. If you do not have a regular appointment or have not been in contact with a mental health professional previously, [here are some resources](#) to help you get started.

6. MINDFULNESS, MEDITATION, PRAYER:

- a. Practice mindfulness, such as meditation, yoga, or prayer for 20 minutes, two times a day. Apps like Headspace and Calm are easy, accessible ways to get started. Meditations can be found online, as well.
- b. Mindfulness can help strengthen the brain pathways that actively buffer the stress response, helping you regulate your stress response more easily.

THINGS TO LIMIT

- News – Make sure you give yourself a break from the 24 hour news cycle and news alerts. It really does make a difference for your physical and mental health.

- Substances – Because our bodies may be creating more stress hormones than usual, we are more susceptible to substance dependence. It's important to keep this top of mind and make sure you're actively regulating your substance intake.
- High-sugar/high-fat foods – An increase in the stress hormone cortisol triggers cravings for high-sugar and high-fat foods. Even if you've previously been a pretty healthy eater, you may find yourself reaching for potato chips, chocolate chip cookies, soda and other unhealthy snacks. Not only does stress increase our cravings for these types of foods, but stress hormones can also make our bodies more resistant to the hormone insulin, increasing our risk of type 2 diabetes, so try to keep the indulgence on these foods to a minimum.

-

THINGS TO EMBRACE

- Each other – our supportive personal connections are scientifically demonstrated to help buffer the impacts of stress on our brains and bodies. Staying in touch with our loved ones and communities virtually, is truly healing. If you see your neighbors when you're outside, remember to continue physical distancing, but say hello and ask how they are. When you're at the grocery store – thank the people working there and engage in conversation. This isn't just important for morale, but staying emotionally connected to one another is biologically crucial for our health.
- Deep breaths – you don't have to be a yogi to know the power of a nice cleansing deep breath. Take them slowly, take them often. Deep breaths are also a great time to check in on our bodies and see where and how we are feeling.
- Stepping outside – while we have to practice physical distancing, being outside and finding green space — even if it's in your back yard— is incredibly helpful for our well-being. Enjoy feeling the sun on our face, listen to the birds singing and see the flowers blooming.
- Hydration – stay hydrated. Drink those 8-10 glasses of water a day.
- Play – Finding ways to play and laugh is super important for our mental and physical health. Turn off the news and watch a silly movie, or better yet, get creative and make a silly movie with members of your household. Call a friend and talk about the times you laughed the hardest, figure out what impressions you can do, pretend the floor is hot lava. These are serious times, but you can still be silly.
- Asking for help or a moment – open up the communication in your house about times when we need help. Whether you have a special code word or just the reminder to yourself. If you need a moment, communicate it and take the moment. If you are having a really hard time, feeling unsafe at home or thinking of harming yourself or someone else, that's, unfortunately, increasingly common right now. [Services and numbers you can call for support are here.](#)

SELF-CARE TEMPLATE FOR ADULTS

During this time your body may be making more or less stress hormones than is healthy. This can lead to physical and/or mental health problems, such as diabetes, heart disease, anxiety, smoking, or unhealthy use of alcohol or other drugs. Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships can protect our brains and bodies from the harmful effects of stress and adversity. The following tips can help you manage your stress response. Healthy nutrition, regular exercise, restful sleep, practicing mindfulness, building

social supports, and getting mental health care can help decrease stress hormones and improve health.

Here are some goals you can set to support your health. *[Check the goals that you are choosing for yourself or write in others that will work for you in each category!]*

Self-Care Planning. I've set a goal of...

- Building my stress busting routine
- Limiting screen/news time to less than ___ hours per day
- Making a plan for what to do when I'm feeling stressed out, angry, or overwhelmed
- Planning with my partner, friends, or family to get support when I need it
- Identifying my strengths and learning more about building resilience
- Calling **211** if I need help meeting basic needs such as food and shelter
- Create your own goal: _____

Supportive relationships. I've set a goal of...

- Spending more high-quality time together with loved ones, such as:
 - Having regular meals together with my household or virtually with those outside my household.
 - Having regular "no electronics" time for us to talk and connect with each other
- Making time to call or video chat with friends and family to maintain a healthy support system for myself
- Connecting regularly with members of my community to build social connections
- Asking for help if I feel physically or emotionally unsafe in my relationships
 - The National Domestic Violence hotline is **800-799-SAFE (7233)**
 - The National Sexual Assault hotline is **800-656-HOPE (4673)**
 - To reach a crisis text line, **text HOME** to **741-741**
- Create your own goal: _____

Exercise. I've set a goal of...

- Limiting screen time to less than ____ hours per day
- Walking at least 30 minutes every day
- Finding a type of exercise that I enjoy and doing it regularly
- Create your own goal: _____

Nutrition. I've set a goal of...

- Eating a healthy breakfast daily (with protein, whole grains, and/or fruit)
- Drinking water instead of juice or soda
- Limiting my alcohol consumption
- Limiting high sugar and/or high fat foods
- Eating at least 5 vegetables and/or fruits every day
- Choosing whole wheat bread and brown rice instead of white bread or rice
- Create your own goal: _____

Sleep. I've set a goal of...

- Being consistent about going to bed at the same time every night
- Creating a cool, calm, and quiet place for sleep, and a relaxing bedtime routine
- Using mindfulness or other stress reduction tools if worry is keeping me up at night
- Turning off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bed
- Create your own goal: _____

Mindfulness. I've set a goal of...

- Taking moments throughout the day to notice how I'm feeling, both physically and emotionally
- Practicing mindful breathing or other calming technique(s) during stressful situations
- Writing a list of five or more things I am grateful for each day
- Creating a regular routine of prayer, meditation, and/or yoga
- Downloading a mindfulness app and doing a mindfulness practice 20 minutes per day
- Create your own goal: _____

Mental health. I've set a goal of...

- Learning more about mental health and/or substance use services (e.g., counseling, groups, medications,)
- Identifying a local mental health professional or support group.
- Scheduling an appointment with a mental health professional
- If I am feeling like I am in crisis, I will get help
 - The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is **800-273-TALK (8255)**
 - To reach a crisis text line, **text HOME to 741-741**
 - SAMHSA Disaster Distress Line **800-985-5990**
- Create your own goal: _____

For more information on resources related to COVID-19, please visit [COVID19.CA.GOV](https://www.covid19.ca.gov).



Racial Stress and Self-Care

Parent Tip Tool



How race-related stress affects you and your relationship with your child

What effect does racism have on your health and wellbeing?

Not only does racism impact you as a parent, it can also impact how you interact with your children. Experiences of racism build on each other and can chip away at your emotional, physical and spiritual resources as a parent, contributing to race-related stress. Race-related stress can make it hard to have the space needed to take care of yourself as a parent, which reduces the emotional space you need to adequately take care of your children.

Racism can impact parents emotionally, physically and spiritually.

- **Physical effects** can include increased hypertension, illness, and risky behaviors such as substance use.
- **Emotional effects** can include depression, anxiety, anger, irritability and aggression.
- **Spiritual effects** can include a decreased sense of purpose, lack of connection with the larger community, isolation from larger social groups, and reduced involvement in communal activities that you enjoy.



Visit the RESilience Initiative website (www.apa.org/res) for additional resources on how to uplift children and youth through healthy communication about race and ethnicity.

Below are some potential reactions to racial stress or trauma:

- **Feelings of shame and lack of confidence** due to feeling that a situation cannot be changed.
- Reminders of the event, such as particular people or situations, can also trigger **strong emotional or physical responses** (e.g., crying or rapid heartbeat).
- **Feeling detached or a lack of trust for others** due to experiencing multiple losses or letdowns. This can make it very difficult to seek out help and to identify potential safe sources of support.
- **Difficulty controlling emotional responses** (going from “zero to one hundred”) can occur as the body helps you adapt to potentially unsafe situations, making you feel constantly on “alert.”

The body’s response to the experience of racism can make accessing resources to cope with the situation difficult. Race-related stress is unique in that it threatens psychological resources that are needed to cope and fulfill basic needs such as financial support, housing, access to jobs, etc.

When your body is in stress mode, it is geared up to help you and your child survive, which sometimes leads to impulsive decisions. If you live in a chronic state of stress related to racism, you can start to engage in *survival coping*. Survival coping can help you to deal with very hard or potentially life-threatening situations. However, if you continue to exist in this mode long-term, it can make it difficult to enjoy being in the moment with your child and can reduce your ability to feel safe and in control.

Race-related stress is unique in that it threatens psychological resources that are needed to cope and fulfill basic needs such as financial support, housing, access to jobs, etc.



What impact can racial stress have on your parenting?

Experiencing race-related stress can also impact the quality of parenting relationships in the following ways:

- **Imposter syndrome**
When you are exposed to racism repeatedly, you often start doubting yourself and can feel like you are an **imposter** in dominant culture settings or in settings where you feel as though you do not belong. Your inner thoughts might sound something like: “Am I being judged?” “Am I worthy?” “I got lucky.” “I only got this because I am Black.”
- **Being overly alert** (hypervigilance)
Experiencing racial stress can make you more aware of potential dangers and negative experiences that can occur. This, in turn, can make the experience of parenting even more stressful. When you interact with your children, you can sometimes be reminded of negative race-related experiences that you had when you were a child. This reminder can amp up emotional responses, or hyperarousal, making it hard for you to “keep your cool” and be open to flexible problem solving.
- **“Helicopter parenting”** (monitoring in fear)
These experiences of racism and unwarranted blame or lack of acceptance can make you want to protect your children so much, that you don’t allow them to explore in the way that they need to. You may shelter them from failures, which everyone needs to experience in order to learn how to manage everyday life. You may tend to be overly cautious or suspicious. Examples can include not allowing your children to have sleepovers or go to the park, even with your supervision.

- **Difficulty regulating emotions**

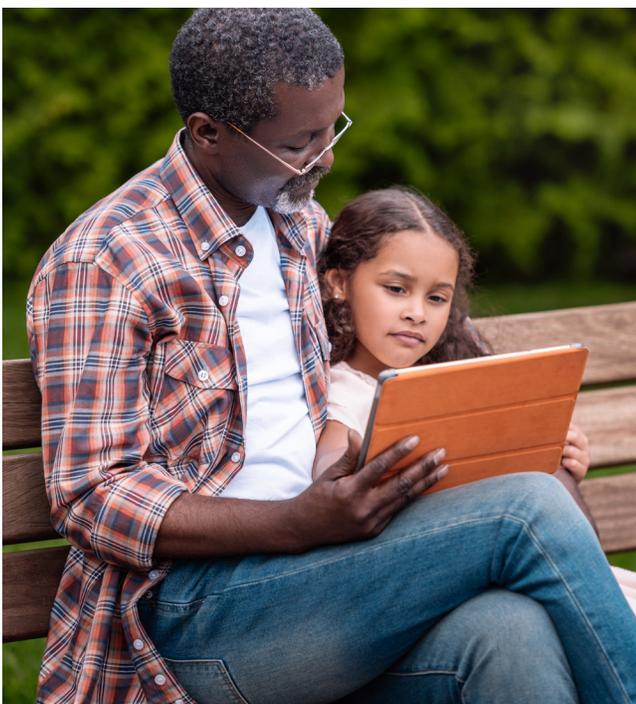
When your past influences your emotional state, it can affect your emotional responses to both big and minor stressors with children, such as when they misbehave. This, in turn, can lead to being overprotective or overuse of physical discipline, as a means of survival.

For children, having parents who can keep perspective (stay cool) when children are upset or misbehaving is very important. Likewise, it is important to stay calm when disciplining a child, otherwise discipline may go overboard. Both of these things can be hard if you are having difficulty controlling your emotions.

- **Avoidance**

Avoiding situations that are related to racism can be a needed strategy to survive; such as instances that may involve violence or threat to yourself or your family. Sometimes you may avoid reminders of past experiences due to the pain or discomfort they cause.

If you find yourself avoiding strong feelings or situations with your child that bring up painful memories, it may make it hard to show affection and support for your child. It may even make it difficult to know how to provide emotional support for your child during times of stress. For instance, if your child brings up their own experience of oppression or an event in their life reminds you of something from your own childhood.



- **Mistrusting others**

Racism can lead to distrust or mistrust of other communities. Internalized racism is when you begin to accept negative messages about your own abilities and inherent worth by the dominant group in society.

When you use society's norms to judge yourself, you can feel depressed, unworthy, and just not good enough. You are taught in many ways to take these feelings and paint them onto another group.

Intra and interracial violence, contention among disenfranchised communities or color, and the way the media conveys information about people of color, contribute to this.

This kind of coping can make you more vulnerable to racism, because on some level you may believe in racial hierarchy and difference when you belittle other groups. And when you show your children that it is right to discriminate against certain other groups, you make them more vulnerable to discrimination that they face.

- **Minimizing racism**

Racism is overwhelming, as is the history of violence. You are sometimes taught that accepting this and minimizing racism is the only thing you can do. But when you ignore racism, and accept powerlessness, you encourage your kids to internalize racism. This can lead to increased levels of depression, anxiety, and externalizing behaviors (e.g., engaging in risky behaviors, such as alcohol or substance use).

When you believe that you should be able to handle and manage it all without a break or without asking for help, you are at increased risk for health problems and can miss important cues about your well-being and safety.

- **Self-blame**

Experiencing chronically unfair and dangerous discriminatory practices due to race can lead to feelings of low worth. For parents, this can also lead to a questioning of your parenting choices and abilities.

- **Unbalanced racial and ethnic socialization (RES)**

Unbalanced messaging or communication about race and ethnicity occurs when you only promote messages of mistrust, preparation for bias, or only give racial pride messages to your children.

| Strategies to deal with racial stress and practice self-care.

So, what can you do to mitigate racial stress?

As parents, it is important to develop positive identities and share your cultural identities with your children. Positive cultural identity and advocacy are protective factors against racism, which can help to reduce and prevent racial stress.

There are many other ways to cope with stress and everyone has different preferences. Reducing stress can also allow you to model healthy coping strategies for your child. Here are some suggestions you can try.

- 1. Build or access a support network.** You are not the only person dealing with race-related stress and connecting with other people with similar experiences and feelings can help you to successfully navigate racism.
 - a. Talk with family and trusted friends specifically about racialized events that have occurred and how to handle them
 - b. Start or join a group with others who may have had similar experiences and similar interests, like a book club that reads books by Black authors, or spend time with other African American parents who have the same concerns you do about how your children are treated at the school.
 - c. Seek out activities that you can do with your friends or family (e.g., exercising, cooking, watching a family show or movie together, etc.).
- 2. Incorporate cultural foods, activities, music, books, and other traditions into your home.** For example, take some time for yourself to listen to music that reflect and promote your culture, that make you feel good about yourself.
 - a. Here are some song suggestions: Brown Skin Girls by Beyoncé, Don't Touch My Hair by Solange, Dear Mama and The Blacker the Berry by Tupac, etc.
- 3. Get some exercise.** It can be as simple as going for a walk and enjoying the outside; going for a run; a simple 5-10 minutes of stretching or yoga exercises; or joining a group workout session that fosters community. Being physically active is proven to help reduce and manage stress.
- 4. Take 10-20 minutes to practice deep breathing exercises or meditation.**
 - a. Here's a good time to incorporate Dr. Howard Stevenson's [mindfulness techniques](#) (**Calculate, locate, communicate, and breathe and exhale**).
- 5. Journal**
 - a. Take 5-10 minutes in the morning, before, bed or both to write down your thoughts and feelings and reflect on your day.
 - b. You can also write down positive affirmations or positive things that happened to you today.
- 6. Limit your media intake.** Be mindful of the media you take in and how long you spend taking it in. The media can be a source of race-related stress, through constant coverage of racial injustices and discrimination. Try disconnecting from social media and news for 15 minutes to one hour today and reflect on how you feel afterwards.
- 7. Seek out counseling/therapy** from therapists who you feel you can relate to or reflect your cultural values to discuss ongoing stressful situations, process complicated feelings, and strengthen your resolve.
- If spirituality plays an important role in your life, **use your belief system to cope with stress.** This could involve connecting with other groups at your church or individuals who share your spiritual beliefs, confiding in your spiritual leaders, or participating in your spiritual rituals (e.g., prayer, meditation).
- Take some time to **listen to a podcast** that you enjoy.
 - a. For example, [Therapy for Black Girls](#) podcast provides discussions with psychologists on a variety of topics, such as race-related stress.



Coping with Race-Related Stress

Coping with Race-Related Stress

The first year of college marks a significant milestone in your transition to adulthood. As you settle into a campus routine, you will most likely be tasked with adjusting to being separated from your family, forming new friendships, and coping with a more rigorous academic curriculum. Although it is often exhilarating to gain a new sense of independence and responsibility during this process, at times you may find it difficult to juggle the demands of your social and academic life. Unfortunately, among students of color, the common stressors of the college experience are often compounded by the burden of race-related stress, stereotype threat, and the imposter phenomenon. The purpose of this brochure is to define race-related stress and the impact it can have on the academic and social success of students of color. Additionally, it will provide tips on how to effectively cope with race-related stress and maximize one's academic potential.

Racism and Race-Related Stress

As a student of color, the additional frustrations you may experience might be the result of racism, which leads to race-related stress. Racist actions usually involve some form of racial prejudice and discrimination. However, at times you may find yourself questioning whether you were a victim of a racist act. This is a common reaction because modern-day racism tends to be covert in nature. Additionally, perpetrators may not recognize their actions as racist because their behavior does not mimic the more overt forms of racism commonly seen in the past. The uncertainty that can accompany perceptions of racism is often due to a misunderstanding of the behaviors that constitute racism. To understand racism it may be helpful to understand the concepts of prejudice and discrimination.

What is prejudice?

Prejudice refers to any negative beliefs, feelings, judgments, or opinions we hold about people based on their group membership. The group membership does not necessarily have to involve race/ethnicity. People can be prejudiced based on several group categories such as religious affiliation, political affiliation, membership in a sorority/fraternity, a particular major (e.g., believing that math/science majors are nerds), gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. Prejudice that is based on an individual's race/ethnicity is known as "racial prejudice." If we hold negative beliefs against members of a different group, these negative beliefs may cause us to discriminate against members of that group.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination occurs when a person is harassed or treated less favorably because of their membership in a particular group. These groups can be based on race/ethnicity, political affiliation, religious affiliation, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability status, socioeconomic status, etc. An example of discrimination is a student organization that refuses to accept members of a certain racial/ethnic group.

What is racism?

Racism is racial prejudice that has been incorporated into the functions of major institutions, corporations, and social systems such as universities, healthcare organizations, banking, housing, and governmental policies. Racism leads to discriminating against a minority racial/ethnic group while maintaining the benefits and privileges of a majority racial/ethnic group which holds most of the power within the major institutions, corporations, and social systems. When the majority group in power makes decisions based upon racial prejudice, this can lead to unjust sociopolitical barriers and policies against the minority group.

Race-Related Stress

When students of color experience racism, it not only causes problems in their social and economic lives, but also negatively impacts their physical and psychological health. Race-related stress refers to the psychological distress associated with experiences of racism. It is important to understand that you can experience race-related stress even if you were mistaken that a racist act occurred. Race-related stress reactions only require that a person believes that they were the victim of racism. Below is a listing of the detrimental effects of race-related stress:

Intense emotional reactions:

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Frustration
- Depression
- Helplessness-Hopelessness
- Isolation
- Paranoia
- Resentment
- Sadness
- Self-blame
- Self-doubt

Ineffective coping:

- Avoidance
- Disengaging
- Substance Use

Health Concerns:

- Heart Disease
- Hypertension
- Muscle Tension

These psychological and physical effects can have a significant effect on your daily life. For example, if you feel isolated due to experiences of racism, you may be reluctant to interact with students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds or participate in campus activities such as student organizations, intramural sports, classroom discussions, and study groups. You may also experience a phenomenon known as stereotype threat, which involves the fear that one's actions will confirm existing stereotypes about a person's self-identified racial/ethnic group. Students of color who experience stereotype threat may begin to believe that their peers do not regard them as individuals, but as representatives of their racial/ethnic group. The anxiety that often accompanies stereotype threat can have a negative affect on your performance on academic tasks such as class participation, assignments, and exams. Stereotype threat can also lead to the Imposter Phenomenon if you internalize the negative racial stereotypes about the capabilities of your racial/ethnic group.

What is the Imposter Phenomenon?

The Imposter Phenomenon can occur if you do not believe that you are as intellectually capable as your peers or have the skills necessary to fulfill the requirements of your role as a student. These beliefs may lead you to dismiss any academic or career-related successes as based upon external factors such as beginner's luck, extra work effort, networking with influential people, or filling a perceived quota (e.g., "I was only offered the internship because they needed more female interns"). The Imposter Phenomenon can occur across gender, racial/ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, and careers. Therefore, if you suffer from feelings of inadequacy, you are not alone. There are surgeons, lawyers, architects, graduate students, accomplished novelists, performers, historians, and professors who also struggle with the Imposter Phenomenon.

Effects of the Imposter Phenomenon:

- Anxiety
- Denial of competence
- Fear
- Guilt
- Life dissatisfaction

- Overachievement
- Paranoia
- Sadness
- Shame

Many people who experience the Imposter Phenomenon believe that they are the only ones who have these beliefs or feelings. They live in constant fear of the “truth” of their capabilities being discovered by their peers, superiors, students, partners, etc. and, therefore, work very hard to succeed and gain recognition while wearing a mask of self-confidence. People with imposter feelings are often skilled at convincing others that they are confident, self-assured, and proud of their accomplishments. However, the disconnect between their outward appearance and their inner emotional state contributes to a feeling of overall life dissatisfaction. As a college student, if you suffer from the Imposter Phenomenon, you may avoid answering questions in class or having a professor review a paper due to fear of negative evaluations. A successful completion of a project may cause only temporary happiness because the success is not recognized as proof of one’s capabilities. Likewise, an unsuccessful project may be perceived as validation of one’s perceived lack of intelligence and/or skill.

Recommendations for Coping with Race-Related Stress and the Imposter Phenomenon

Fortunately, there ways to combat the negative effects of race-related stress and produce positive outcomes.

- Build a support network. You are not the only person dealing with race-related stress and connecting with other people with similar experiences and feelings can help you successfully navigate racism.
- If spirituality plays an important role in your life, utilize your belief system as a way to cope with stress. This could involve connecting with others who share your spiritual beliefs, confiding in your spiritual leaders, or participating in your spiritual rituals (e.g., prayer, meditation).
- Having a positive cultural identity and strong sense of self is particularly helpful in combating race-related stress, stereotype threat, and the Imposter Phenomenon. Take classes that focus on the historical experiences and contributions of your cultural group and join campus organizations that celebrate your cultural norms and ideals. Your campus’ Office of Minority Affairs is a great place to start forming connections.
- Make positive reinterpretations of negative thoughts and reframe negative situations with a three step process:
 1. **Identify negative feelings.** For instance, a failing grade on an examination may lead to the negative thought “The admissions committee made a mistake when they accepted me.”
 2. **Perform a reality check.** Understand that your feelings can often distort the reality of the situation. Think of examples that counter the negative thoughts and feelings that you are experiencing. For instance, the admissions committee most likely made their decision because your past academic performance fit their acceptance criteria. Additionally, failure on one examination does not automatically indicate that you cannot succeed in any of your classes.
 3. **Make a positive reinterpretation.** You can reframe the initial negative thought by saying “The admissions committee accepted me because they believe in my potential to succeed” and “I know I am a highly capable person and I can improve my academic performance with additional support.” You can also reframe your experiences with racism with statements such as “This can only make me stronger” or “My elders have gone through this and persevered and so can I.”
- Become involved in social action.
 - Document acts of racism or intolerance. Don’t ignore or minimize your experiences, and think broadly about what could be an act of racism. It doesn’t have to be an overt act (e.g., professor consistently not calling on you or minimizing your contributions, curriculum racially biased, etc). Talk to someone you trust and report it.
 - Be strategic in social action. When attempting to change policy or procedures, it is important that you do this effectively by:
 - Be clear about what it is you want to see change.
 - Be clear about how you see that change being implemented.
 - Make sure you talk to the person/department that will most likely be able to get you what you want.
 - Be mindful about timing (e.g., when is it the time to share your experiences and frustrations, when is it time to work on change and demands, when is it time to negotiate).
 - Don’t work in isolation. Get a team so that the work on these tasks aren’t so daunting for any one person.
 - Call people out when you witness acts of injustice and intolerance.

- Try not to get discouraged. Change doesn't happen over night and movements are a long process. Remember that you are one cog in the wheel, and your contribution, no matter how small you may think it is, is a vital component of the movement.
- Don't underestimate the power you have to make change. Student involvement has been instrumental in starting major movements through out history.

Additional Resources on the Topic

Clance, P.R. (1985). *The Impostor Phenomenon: Overcoming the Fear That Haunts Your Success*. Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers.

Sue, D. (2003). *Overcoming Our Racism: The Journey to Liberation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

From the Counseling Center at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Providence, Rhode Island 02912, USA
Phone: 401-863-1000

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Suicide Warning Signs

Seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK if you or someone you know exhibits any of the following signs:

- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
 - Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means
 - Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person
 - Feeling hopeless
 - Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger or seeking revenge
 - Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities—seemingly without thinking
 - Feeling trapped—like there's no way out
 - Increasing alcohol or drug use
 - Withdrawing from friends, family, and society
 - Feeling anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
 - Experiencing dramatic mood changes
 - Seeing no reason for living or having no sense of purpose in life
-

Are you or
someone you love
at risk of suicide?

NATIONAL
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
LIFELINE™
I-800-273-TALK
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

Get the facts and take
appropriate action.