



Developing a Better Understanding

MAINTAINING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to impact our way of living. Our daily activities look different now as we continue to practice social distancing and limit activities in order to limit exposure and prevent spread of the coronavirus. We are living in an environment of extreme uncertainty and there is not a clearly identifiable end. This uncertainty can lead to stress, confusion, and fear that can be exacerbated by spikes or surges of confirmed cases. Continuous and ongoing stress can lead to a number of possible mental health concerns. It is common to feel stressed or anxious during this time. The National Alliance on Mental Illness reports that coping with COVID-19 may be especially hard for people who already manage feelings of anxiety or emotional distress. Recognizing how you're feeling can help you care for yourself, manage your stress, and cope with difficult situations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shares the importance of taking care of your mental health.

Mental health is an important part of overall health and wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It may also affect how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices during an emergency.

People with pre-existing mental health conditions or substance use disorders may be particularly vulnerable in an emergency. Mental health conditions (such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia) affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior in a way that influences their ability to relate to others and function each day. These conditions may be situational (short-term) or long-lasting (chronic). People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. If you think you have new or worse symptoms, call your healthcare provider.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

It is important to acknowledge that seeking mental health help is not a weakness. It is as important to take care of your mental health as it is to take care of your physical health.

Recovering from COVID-19 or Ending Home Isolation

If you have or were exposed to COVID-19 the stress from being separated and physically distanced from others can be even more challenging. Each person ending a period of home isolation may feel differently about it.

Emotional reactions may include:

- Mixed emotions, including relief.
- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones.
- Stress from the experience of having COVID-19 and monitoring yourself or being monitored by others.
- Sadness, anger, or frustration because friends or loved ones have fears of getting the disease from you, even though you are cleared to be around others.
- Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties while you had COVID-19.
- Worry about getting re-infected or sick again even though you've already had COVID-19.
- Other emotional or mental health changes.

Children may also feel upset or have other strong emotions if they, or someone they know, has COVID-19, even if they are now better and able to be around others again.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Ways to Cope with Strong Feelings

The Ohio Department of Health shared the following “Ways to Cope with strong Feelings Related to COVID-19.”

- Remember that distress, anxiety, fear, and strong emotions are normal in times of distress or crisis. Remind yourself and others that these feelings will fade.
- Learn and follow tips for preparing for and responding to COVID-19.
- Learn and follow tips on how to prevent COVID-19.
- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19. It is important to get good information to help you prepare and respond, but don't overwhelm yourself or your family with information.
- Eat nutritious food, exercise, get adequate sleep, stay hydrated, avoid alcohol and drugs, and make time to relax and unwind.
- Incorporate stretching or meditation into your routine. Take deep breaths when feeling overwhelmed.
- Stay connected with friends and family. Discuss your concerns and be supportive of theirs.
- Keep participating in hobbies/activities that do not expose you to close contact with others in confined spaces.
- If you have a mental health condition, continue with your treatment plan and monitor for any new symptoms. Call your healthcare provider with any concerns.

Recognize signs of distress:

- Feeling hopeless or helpless.
- Feelings of numbness, disbelief, anxiety or fear.
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares and upsetting thoughts and images.
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Anger or short-temper.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Reach out for help:

- Contact your local ADAMH Board. Find your Board contact information at www.oacbha.org
- Connect with the Crisis Text Line by texting 4HOPE to 741 741.
- Reach the Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services COVID CareLine at 1.800.720.9616
- Contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Disaster Distress Helpline by calling 1-800-985-5990 or texting TalkWithUs to 66746.
- 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).

Get Your Information from Trusted Sources

The Ohio Department of Health's coronavirus.ohio.gov website hosts helpful, reliable information that is updated daily. In addition to tips for stopping the spread of COVID-19 and statistics on confirmed case numbers, confirmed deaths, and hospital and ICU admissions, the website also has helpful videos and dedicated resources for families and individuals, as well as employers and employees.

Questions about COVID-19?

Visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH for answers.