

Dealing with Psychological Impact of Covid19 Pandemic

- A Guide For Students

Covid19 has been declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on March 11 2020. According to WHO pandemic is an epidemic (illness related events clearly in excess of normal expectancy) occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people. In simple terms a pandemic is a disease that spreads across large regions and not confined to a single place. The death tolls pertaining to the outbreak of COVID19 have been unprecedented and alarming across the world. As the coronavirus pandemic sweeps across the globe, it is causing widespread concern, fear and stress.

A key to manage an infectious outbreak is by trying to decrease the epidemic peak. This decreases the risk of health services being overstripped by their capacity to care for people. COVID19 has been a challenging experience for almost all of us and very truly so. Closing of offices, universities, colleges, schools and all market places, self quarantine all resulting in extreme changes in our lifestyle. All of us are social beings. We cannot imagine ourselves living in isolation or away from people especially our near and dear ones. However, the current scenario of nationwide lockdown has literally confined us to one place significantly restricting our physical activity and subsequently social distancing from people around us. The sudden changes have been quite overwhelming for us to adjust as this is for the first time we are going through such experiences. The daily figures of infected and affected people further makes the picture all the more scary.

Amid all these changes and disturbances in our ongoing functioning, person is likely to experience varied emotional reactions which may be grouped as follows:

Anxiety stemming from a fear of unknown as to what will happen next, a sense of danger.
Sadness and grief stemming from the sense of hopelessness, helplessness and loss.
Frustration and irritation stemming from obstruction in ones goals, and a sense of injustice.
The more uncertain and unexpected is the event, the more intense are our emotional reactions.

Hence, it becomes essential for all of us to understand as to how we can effectively deal with the current situation.

1. First and foremost it is important for all of us to accept the situation and validate our feeling towards it. It is important to reaffirm ourselves that it is okay to be little anxious or sad sometimes. Considering the strange situation we are put in, it is not a big deal to feel frustrated or anxious at times. However, we have to constantly remind ourselves that this particular situation is transient. It is going to change one day so rather than worrying about what will happen tomorrow, it is best to take each day as it comes.

2. Another major concern is **what to do throughout the day**. Since most of us are used to the hectic schedules and are out of homes for a major part of the day for our studies or any other work and suddenly we feel caged in the four walls of house. The general feeling that creeps in our mind in that the day doesnot end and is too long and boring. It is pertinent to mention here is that we should develop a daily routine. Just as before the lockdown we were following a schedule of getting up, going to University coming back home, doing some housework and studying and sleeping maybe. In the same fashion it is important for us to plan our day now. We have to decide on how we will manage our day. It is very important to follow a regular schedule of waking up at the same time every day and also sleeping at the same time.

3. **Follow our hobbies and fun time** - We can look out for opportunities provided by us during this compulsory lockdown period. We often crib of not having time for family or for ourselves. One can see this as a time to start something new. We can cultivate our hobbies of cooking, painting, drawing or writing, listening to the music etc. in addition to the academic requirements do something that we enjoy. Besides this, it has also given us chance to spend some quality time with our family members. One can plan some work or fun activity engaging the entire family as a unit. This will not only help in strengthening bonds among the family members but also allow the younger generation to interact with the older generation and benefit from their rich experiences of life.

4. **Discovering ourselves-** Try to discover more about ourselves and examine our own mental and emotional processes. This is the best time to ponder about your strengths and weaknesses and possible ways to overcome the flaws. In the same direction we can make daily notes in a diary at the end of each day mentioning atleast one good thing that happened to us or we did on that day. It may be helping our parents, doing some work properly or just being happy listening to a good music or reading a good book. Such attempt will help us in appreciating all the good, we are not able to sense/feel otherwise .

5. **Need for limiting the social media exposure-** Knowledge is power. There is no doubt that when we know more we feel more empowered and in control of things. However, it is equally important for us to realize how much is too much. So, we should educate ourselves about the current scenario but at the same time avoid social media overdose because all information coming to us through various media sources may not be authentic and may be just be speculative or just based on opinions of others. Such false information is liable to make us more apprehensive and negativistic and can have a huge impact on our mental health. So we need to watch out for what information we are getting and how we are getting. Take breaks from social media.

6. **Exercising and Meditation-** We need to take care of ourselves by eating healthy and excercising regularly. A moderate amount of exercise for a period as short as 30 to 40 minutes/ per day can increase our happiness multiple bounds as it helps in releasing happy hormones in body and relaxes our mind.

7. **Stay connected-** Despite the disruptive effects of COVID19 including social distancing

which is currently dominating our daily lives, it is extremely important for us to stay connected through phone calls or video chats to check on our family, friends and acquaintances.

8. Balancing your thoughts- Do not feed negative thoughts in mind. Rather try to replace them with positive emotions of gratitude of being safe and with your family, hope and optimism. Be proactive and have a firm belief that the things will be soon normal again. It is important to remember that we all are in this together.

9. Dealing with social stigma and discrimination associated with Covid19

Current situation created by Covid19 has caused fear and anxiety among people leading to prejudices against people and communities and stigma.

Such behaviour may culminate into increased hostility, chaos and unnecessary social disruptions. Cases have been reported of people affected with COVID-19 as well as healthcare workers, sanitary workers and police, who are in the frontline for management of the outbreak, facing discrimination on account of heightened fear and misinformation about infection. Even those who have recovered from COVID-19 face such discrimination. Further, certain communities and areas are being labeled purely based on false reports floating in social media and elsewhere. There is an urgent need to counter such prejudices and to rise as a community that is empowered with health literacy and responds appropriately in the face of this adversity.

- Although COVID-19 is a highly contagious disease which spreads fast and can infect any one of us, we can protect ourselves through social distancing, washing our hands regularly and following sneezing / coughing etiquettes.
- **Despite all precautions, if anybody catches the infection, it is not their fault. In situation of distress, the patient and the family need support and cooperation. It must be noted that the condition is curable and most people recover from it.**
- Healthcare workers including doctors, nurses, and allied & healthcare professionals are rendering their services tirelessly to provide care and medical / clinical support in this situation of crisis. Sanitary workers and police are also doing selfless service and playing critical roles in addressing the challenge of COVID-19. They all deserve our support, praise and appreciation.

Dos

- Appreciate efforts of people providing essential services and be supportive towards them and their families
- Share only the authentic information available on the website of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. Of India or the World Health Organisation
- Cross check any information related to CoVID-19 from reliable sources before forwarding any messages on social media
- Share positive stories of those who have recovered from COVID-19

Don'ts

- Never spread names or identity of those affected or under quarantine or their locality on the social media
- Avoid spreading fear and panic
- Do not target healthcare and sanitary workers or police. They are there to help you
- Do not label any community or area for spread of COVID-19
- Avoid addressing those under treatment as COVID victims. Address them as "people recovering from COVID"

Making use of available 24x7 Psychological Counselling Helpline - toll free No. 08046110007 initiated by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India in case of formal help regarding any mental health issue like anxiety, stress, fear and so many other issues wherein professionals from all over the country will be available to help us in dealing with this situation more effectively.

Additionally the schedule of Covid19 Tele-Counselling for Mental Health issues organized by Amity University Haryana (AUH), Gurugram:

Time/ Day	9.30.00 AM to 10.30 AM	5.30 PM to 6.30 PM
Monday	Dr. Rajesh Nair Dr. Vikas Sharma	Dr. Manpreet Ola Dr. Nidhi Mehta
Tuesday	Dr. Manpreet Ola Dr. Nidhi Mehta	Dr. Rajesh Nair Dr. Vikas Sharma
Wednesday	Dr. Mehfooz Ahmed Dr. Mustafa Nadeem Kirmani	Dr. Komal Verma Dr. Anupama Saxena
Thursday	Dr. Komal Verma Dr. Anupama Saxena	Dr. Mehfooz Ahmed Dr. Mustafa Nadeem Kirmani
Friday	Dr. Manpreet Ola Dr. Nidhi Mehta	Dr. Mehfooz Ahmed Dr. Mustafa Nadeem Kirmani
Saturday	Dr. Rajesh Nair Dr. Vikas Sharma	Dr. Komal Verma Dr. Anupama Saxena

Contact Nos of faculty from AIBAS and AICP, AUH, Gurugram

Sr. No.	Name of Faculty and Institute	Mobile No.
1.	Dr. Rajesh Nair, AIBAS	7838621918
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3.	Dr. Komal Verma, AIBAS	9571665792
4.	Dr. Manpreet Ola, AICP	9818985711
5.	Dr. Anupma Saxena, AIBAS	9871031079
6.	Dr. Mustafa Nadeem Kirmani, AICP	8295320920
7.	Dr. Mehfooz Ahmed, AICP	9718227597
8.	Dr. Nidhi Mehta, AICP	8588008056

Please remember, in the fight against Covid19 we all are playing a very important role. Your teachers and University are standing with you to provide all necessary support. Let us effectively play our role in the nation building by adhering to the guidelines issued by Government to fight with Covid19.

Jai Hind

Tele-Counseling: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is Tele-counseling?

The utilization of technology for imparting psychological support services from a distance, by calling at dedicated mobile numbers and landline number.

2. What are the timings for tele-counseling services?

The timings of Tele-counseling are as follows:

Morning timings 0930 hrs -1030 hrs

Evening timings 1730 hrs-1830 hrs

3. Who provides Tele-counseling services?

Faculty member with at least Post-graduate degree in Psychology provides counseling support in consultation with a trained Clinical Psychologist having M.Phil degree in Clinical Psychology.

4. What are the expenses involved in availing the Tele-counseling services?

The services are available for students and faculty members of University, free of cost. You need to have access to telephone connection to avail the services.

5. What are other facilities available through Tele-counseling helpline?

The helpline is intended for psychological support only. No other services are available through this helpline. The academic related matters may be directed to the concerned academic authorities.

6. Is confidentiality of information maintained?

Yes, The information is kept confidential within the framework of applicable rules.

7. Are there certain psychological conditions which are not suitable for Tele-counseling?

Yes, Certain psychological conditions may not be effectively addressed by Tele-Counseling. The counselor will assist you in treatment related decision making.

8. Is medicine related advice available through Tele-counseling?

No, Only psychological support will be provided.

9. How to schedule a Tele-counseling appointment?

No prior appointment is required. The services can be availed within the specified time slot.
