

COVID 19: Adult Perspective

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Distress for Adults

- There is no doubt that C-19 has resulted in significant psychological distress for many of us. In the brief time allotted to me I want to highlight some of the ways that C-19 *and* sheltering in place has resulted in psychological issues for adults.

Grief

- You may know people who have suffered and even died as a result of C-19 or not going to the hospital with other illnesses resulting in more medical problems. In these circumstances, GRIEF would be a natural reaction. Grief is made even more significant with social isolation.
- A prolonged grief reaction, perhaps beyond a year or a reaction that results in a significant Depression marked by difficulty eating, sleeping, enjoying, intense anxiety, loss of pleasure in things that used to be fun, requires a referral to a mental health practitioner.

Sadness

- Sadness, perhaps grief's cousin, seems to be easy to come by these days. My grandmother, the great family psychologist, used to say, "a sadness shared is a sadness halved." Please make sure you are sharing your feelings. In a discussion with a cardiologist I know, I reminded him that more die of heartache than heart failure.

PTSD

- If you or your relatives have been on the First Responder side of treating C-19, you may be close to those who are suffering. As many as a 1/3 to 1/2 of doctors, nurses, and other health professionals currently may well be suffering from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and this can be a delayed reaction.
- A recent study reported that, in the near future, as many as 47% of medical care workers *will* suffer trauma reactions that will require psychological assistance.

Anxiety

- You don't have to be a first responder to be suffering. Approximately 5-10% of us have anxiety disorders. The conversation, the news, the inner thoughts seem to run along the brain's "warning system" which is the neurological way of saying our Anxiety response system.
- Anxiety can be painful; anxiety can be overwhelming; or anxiety can be our friend and signal a need to understand and cope with the dangers presenting to us.

Anxiety takes place in the future. What if something terrible will happen?

- When anxiety is overwhelming, it needs to be brought into the office — or in today's world — the screen of a mental health professional.

Financial insecurity

- There are, of course, real world issues that are pressing in with psychological effects. Thirty million Americans have lost their jobs or at least have job insecurity. While unemployment insurance and employer paid salaries are helping some, many families are financially stressed.
- Financial insecurity, and eventually food insecurity, can unhinge any family's wellbeing.

Giving

- We can help by giving. Giving to others is a form of prayer and a way of make us feel that we are contributing.

Loneliness

Many of us are sheltering in place. Before the virus, we had a pandemic of Loneliness. In the USA, 35 millions of us, 28%, live alone (in 1969 it was 17%). A recent study from the U of Chicago reported more that 30% of folks above 70 reported feeling lonely.

Since 2018, in the UK, there is a Minister of Loneliness, to help fight this Western pandemic. When isolation meets loneliness, depression, anxiety, physical illness or even self-harm can result. While it is simple to say, it is hard to do these days: Reach out and touch someone!

Uncertainty.

- Lastly, I wanted to mention, Uncertainty. These days we have nothing but uncertainty as we look down the road. Uncertainty breeds anxiety. We are a species that likes certainty and routine. We don't have that. And, we are often not so good at recognizing when we are in trouble because many of us are alone and don't have others to consult with or "bother." What are the signs; can't stop the worries, can't concentrate, can't sleep, more irritable, feeling hopeless. Increase in substance use and abuse, social anxiety, even denial that there is a problem are other signs.

Make the call

- Mental health professionals know a lot about treating anxiety and depression. We actually have gone to school to for that. And we are a friendly bunch!

What about the After?

- The after COVID may take quite a while! 'Now' will turn into 'After' soon, but not yet. Maintain perspective and hope

What do we take with us?

- Two things are important to remember as we look to the future.
- *We will* go through the dark door of COVID into the future. Think about what you want to take with you; more contact with family; more awareness of racial inequity; a greater understanding of who actually *is* essential, a sense of what is really valuable to you.

Forgetting

- Humans have amnesia easily. We forget, because we are fatigued, that we *need* to continue to be careful. There is a reason that the vulnerable are called “vulnerable.” Let’s continue to be careful out there!

Connect

- Find ways to connect now so that it carries over to then; Rule of thumb... connect with 3 people/day.

Create new
habits:

Connect with organizations like
Senior Link or Quarantine Buddy

Do an activity with family or friends
on line; cook, paint, eat, drink!

Learn how to or practice video
chatting

You don't have
to feel this bad

**Jewish Family Services (a Federation
supported mental health facility).**

**Open Path Collective (sliding scale \$30-
60)**

Support
Groups,

National Alliance for Mental Illness Peer
Support Communities (Therapy Tribe),

AA On-line Meetings,

For crisis counseling, Crisis Text Line 24/7 or
Lifeline 800-273-8255

Do good
things!

Exercise!

Walk in the woods

Do an online yoga class

DO good
things!

Practice Gratitude

Give to others

Limit the News