HARC'S GUIDE ON
TAKING CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING A PANDEMIC

BE INFORMED

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease outbreak caused by a new coronavirus that has been detected in more than 100 global locations.[1]

The pandemic we are experiencing may cause emotional distress and anxiety. These feelings are common during a global outbreak. Understanding actual facts about the outbreak may reduce stress.[1]

Where can I find more information about COVID-19?
You should obtain information about the coronavirus from reputable sources such as the following:
- CDC.gov
- https://rivcoph.org/coronavirus
- https://www.mydohc.com/patient-resources/covid-19/

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

Take care of your physical health
Pay attention to your body by taking deep breaths, stretching, or meditating. Get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol and drugs.

Studies have proven aerobic exercises reduce anxiety and depression.[2]

Health benefits include improved sleep, stress relief, improvement in mood and more![2]

STAFF TIP

Our administrative manager, Theresa, has been enjoying usual trail hikes and doing some canyon exploring/rock climbing near her home.

STAFF TIP

Our research associate, Chris, likes to go on walks with his wife to the park. They make sure to socially distance and wear a mask.
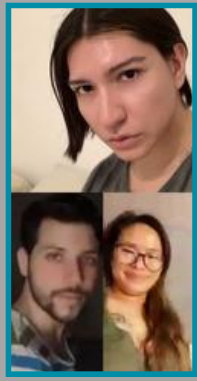
CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Evidence shows that people with strong social connections show decreased chronic inflammation, decreased risk of premature death and lower risk of cardiovascular trouble because personal relationships help cope with stress.[3]

STAFF TIP

Our research assistant, Jerry, has kept in contact with friends via regular video chatting.

It also helps to talk about how you are feeling with people you trust.[4]

There are many other resources available to talk to someone if you are experiencing feelings of distress or anxiety, such as the following:

- Disaster Distress Helpline: Call 1-800-985-590 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to speak with a counselor
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

STAFF TIP

Our CEO, Dr. LeComte-Hinely, deals with stress by coloring these postcards, which she then uses to keep in touch with friends and family.

SEEK ACTIVITIES THAT YOU ENJOY

There are many ways to manage your mental health. For instance, research suggests games may improve players' moods, promote relaxation and ward off anxiety.[5]
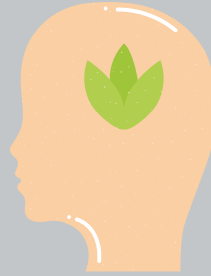
STAFF TIP

To relax and unwind during lockdown, our Director of Research Dr. Leier likes to play Animal Crossing on Nintendo Switch.

TAKE A BREAK TO RELAX

You do not need to take in everything produced in today's 24/7 news cycle. This is because hearing about a pandemic can be mentally exhausting and upsetting. Several mental health professionals advise to take a break from watching, reading, or listening to news.[6]

Consider meditation to clear your mind and improve your mental health. Smiling Mind is a free meditation app with the goal of offering a solution to feelings of anxiety or distress, especially during the coronavirus. It offers a wide variety of programs for all ages, so the entire family may enjoy it.[7] Download at smilingmind.com.au

Perform regular check-ins with yourself. Monitor your symptoms of depression/stress such as prolonged sadness, difficulty sleeping, and/or feelings of hopelessness. Be open to seeking professional help if symptoms persist or worsen.

STAFF TIP

When our research assistant, Amairani, feels overwhelmed, she steps out to her backyard to read a fun book on a hammock.

Sources

1. https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/managing-mental-health-during-covid-19
2. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470658/
3. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/18/coronavirus-isolation-social-recession-physical-mental-health
4. https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/current-events/supporting-your-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/
5. https://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/02/video-game
6. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/news/science-news/2020/supporting-mental-health-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.shtml
7. https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app

For more resources visit: HARCdata.org/covid-19