

## **Mental Health Wellness During Challenging Times**

The following tips are provided by the therapists and counselors at  
**Lutheran Counseling and Family Services of Wisconsin.**

### **Anxiety**

- Limit over saturation of news and media. Being informed is important, but avoid news overload. Pick two reliable sources of information and check them once per day.
- Distract yourself. Watch a positive, upbeat movie, read a feel good book, play your favorite music, do a puzzle or a craft that you enjoy.
- Remind yourself to TRUST. Trust in your faith and find hope and peace there. Trust in those who love and care for you. Trust the medical experts that are working hard to do what is best for everyone.
- Practice self care. Get enough sleep, go for walks, do online yoga. Eat healthy. Set up a schedule for a daily routine and stick to it. Maintaining a sense of normality can reduce stress and anxiety.

### **Feelings of Isolation and Depression**

- Remember that this is a temporary period of isolation to slow the spread of the virus and your effort is helping others in the community to stay healthy.
- Stay connected. Social isolation or quarantine does not mean complete cut off from the world. Reach out to others.
- Develop a plan to reach out to at least one new person each day. Call, video chat, email, or text and let them know that you are thinking of them.
- Find one person who you can openly communicate with. Talk about your worries and fears and listen to theirs. Nurture and reassure each other.
- Explore what you can do to help others. Being of help to others can boost your own self esteem and will be greatly appreciated by those you affect.

### **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)**

- The continuous mentions of disease, hand washing and cleansing may be a trigger to those experiencing or recovering from OCD.
- Understand you are not alone in your worries and fears. There are experts guiding us. Give yourself permission to follow the Center for Disease Control's advice. Your brain may be making its own rules, but stick just to the experts'. For example, when washing hands restrict yourself to only do the recommended time. Once you follow the recommendations, tell yourself it was enough and let it go.
- Don't over saturate on the news. Believe the experts when they say there is no real shortage of food and hoarding is not necessary and is counterproductive.
- Set rules you can follow and know what you can and cannot control. You can't control the worries, but you can control what you do next.

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- Be kind to yourself. Acknowledge you are doing the best you can. A mistake here or there is okay. Give yourself a time out and refocus on your personal rules. Tell yourself you can do hard things.

### **Children**

- Discuss the situation in an open and honest way with children, relating facts in a way that is appropriate for their age and temperament.
- Listen to any questions they may have, assure them they are safe and it's normal to feel concerned. Let them know you are safe as well and following expert advice to stay healthy and well.
- Remind them that medical, scientific and public health experts around the world are working hard to contain the virus, treat those affected and develop a vaccine as quickly as possible.
- Share how you deal with your own stress. Develop a plan to do stress busting activities together.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, stay connected with friends and eat well.
- Create a daily schedule. Kids are used to routine and structure in schools and thrive on having consistency in their lives.

It's normal to feel overwhelmed or stressed by the coronavirus pandemic. If you are concerned about your own mental health, we encourage you to acknowledge your feelings and concerns activate your support network and seek professional support.

For those already managing mental health issues, continue with your treatment plan and monitor for any new symptoms.

Due to the scope of the pandemic, many insurance plans are accepting telehealth as a viable option to conduct therapy. Check with your plan in advance to see if this is covered or the staff at LCFS can assist you.

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