

SUPPORTING SBISD

TIPS ON MANAGING STRESS RELATED TO COVID-19



You are not alone.

Finding Strength - Together

The spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) may be stressful for some. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in both adults and children. **It's important to remember that taking direct action and coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.**

It's important to note that everyone reacts differently to stress. How you respond during periods

of high stress could depend on many factors. Respond depends on many factors and a range of influences. Examples of factors that could affect an individual's response:

- **Chronic disease/high-risk for COVID-19**
- **Age range**
- **Individuals helping with COVID-19 response**
- **Pre-existing mental health conditions including problems with substance use.**

The information provided here is intended to help you recognize the signs and symptoms of stress and find effective ways to manage them.

Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help to reduce anxiety and combat pressure associated with the uncertainty a crisis can induce. It's important to remember you are not alone in this situation. While we may be more isolated or distant, we can still support one another.



Are you stressed? COMMON SYMPTOMS

- **An increase or decrease in energy and activity levels**
- **An increase in alcohol or tobacco, or use of illegal drugs**
- **An increase in irritability, with outbursts of anger and frequent arguing**
- **Having trouble relaxing or sleeping**
- **Crying frequently**
- **Worrying excessively**
- **Wanting to be alone most of the time**
- **Blaming other people for everything**
- **Having difficulty communicating or listening**
- **Inability to have fun or experience pleasure**

Stress & anxiety: Recognizing the signs

What's normal and how you can recognize if you're at risk

So, how do you know if you're under stress and it's normal or not? Why does it matter? First, it's important to recognize if you're suffering from signs of stress.

Many of us soldier on and forget to take the time needed to acknowledge that stress is a factor in our behavior or day-to-day life. Failing to acknowledge this, can trigger bigger problems like depression and anxiety.

Feelings of anxiety and loss of control are normal in an infectious disease outbreak. It's critical to recognize and monitor how you feel to ensure you're able to care for yourself, as well as those you care about.

When you acknowledge stress, you gain perspective on your risk both physically and mentally.

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- **Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones**
- **Changes in sleep or eating patterns**
- **Difficulty concentrating**
- **Worsening of chronic health problems**
- **Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs**

If you notice these signs in your own behavior, don't hesitate to seek support or additional help. If you, or someone you care about, feel overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or like you want to harm yourself or others:

- **Contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)**
- **Call 911**

Individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms.

Common ways stress impacts you:

YOUR BODY

- Having stomach aches or diarrhea
- Having headaches and other pains
- Losing your appetite or eating too much

YOUR EMOTIONS

- Being anxious or fearful
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling angry
- Not caring about anything
- Feeling overwhelmed by sadness

YOUR THINKING

- Having trouble remembering things
- Feeling confused
- Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Having difficulty making decisions

You can reduce the effects of stress

It's important to take care of yourself

It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during and after a disaster. Everyone reacts differently, and your own feelings will change over time.

Notice and accept how you feel. Taking care of your emotional health during an emergency will help you think clearly in order to protect yourself and your family. Self-care during these times will help your long-term healing.

- **Take care of your body** - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- **Connect with others** - Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships, and build a strong support system.
- **Stay informed** - When you feel that you are missing information, you may become more stressed or nervous. Watch, listen to, or read the news for updates from officials. Be aware that there may be rumors during a crisis, especially on social media. Always check your sources and turn to reliable sources of information like your local government and health agencies.
- **Avoid too much exposure to news** - Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do enjoyable activities as much as possible and check for updates between breaks.
- **Seek help when needed** - If stress impacts activities in your daily life for several days or weeks, talk to a clergy member, counselor, or doctor, or contact the SAMHSA helpline at 1-800-985-5990.
- **Take breaks** - Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try taking deep breaths and do activities you usually enjoy.

Things you can do to support yourself

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.



Seeking support and additional help

You may experience serious distress when you hear about an infectious disease outbreak, even if you are at little or no risk of getting sick.

If you or someone you know shows signs of stress as outlined in this document for several days or weeks, get help.

Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline right away if you or someone you know threatens to hurt or kill him - or herself or someone else, or talks or writes about death, dying, or suicide.

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- **Call 911**

PROVIDED BY SBISD COUNSELING SERVICES

Information for this newsletter was sourced from the following organizations:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.org
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, www.samhsa.gov