**The Hidden Risk of COVID-19:   
Our Mental Health and Mental Well-Being**

There is no doubt that the physical symptoms associated with COVID-19 are serious, especially for more vulnerable populations. But the mental health symptoms associated with this crisis also pose a significant threat.

Each day there are reports of new cases, warnings grow stronger, and news gets more distressing. This takes a toll on our mental well-being and sometimes we don’t even realize it. Numerous studies show increased stress has a significant impact on our body, mood, behavior and overall well-being. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-symptoms/art-20050987>

**The most vulnerable population:**

The CDC reminds us all that the vulnerable population goes beyond people with physical conditions, like diabetes, heart disease and autoimmune disease. But it’s very important to realize that **people with preexisting mental health conditions are also at higher risk for mental health distress.**

People who may respond more strongly to a crisis include:

* Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19
* Children and teens
* Those helping with the response to COVID-19 (health care providers and first responders)
* Individuals with mental health conditions, including issues with substance use

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fcoping.html>

**Taking care of ourselves and each other:**  
According to the CDC, it’s important for each of us to also look out for these common signs of mental health distress related to the COVID-19 crisis:

* Feelings of numbness, disbelief, anxiety or fear
* Changes in appetite, energy and activity levels
* Difficulty concentrating
* Difficulty sleeping or nightmares and upsetting thoughts and images
* Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems and skin rashes
* Worsening of chronic health problems
* Anger or short-temper
* Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs

**What you can do:**

First and foremost, if you find yourself needing to talk to someone during this crisis, seek help. Experts emphasize that mental health symptoms are just as valid and significant as the physical symptoms associated with COVID-19.

If you – or a loved one – are having a difficult time coping with the outbreak and want to seek outside help, there are several options:

* Get free support to address your anxiety or stress by speaking to a trained counselor:
  + Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Distress Helpline – 800.985.5990 or by texting TalkWithUS 66746.
    - People with deafness or hearing loss can use their preferred relay service to call 800.985.5990

(source) <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

* + Crisis Text Hotline: Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor.  
    (source) <https://www.crisistextline.org/get-help/coronavirus>
  + Contact your physician or your insurance company (if they have a consultation line, nurse line or tele-behavioral support) to seek mental health support.
  + National Alliance on Mental Illness support line by state: [NAMI's National HelpLine Warmline Directory](https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/BlogImageArchive/2020/NAMI-National-HelpLine-WarmLine-Directory-3-11-20.pdf)
  + Research other resources:
    - The National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) offers:
      * [Top 25 HelpLine Resources](https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-HelpLine/Top-25-HelpLine-Resources)
      * [National HelpLine Resource Directory (79 pages)](file:///C:\Users\jacob.boston\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\IE\UZ9MRP5S\•%09https:\www.nami.org\NAMI\media\NAMI-Media\Images\FactSheets\NAMINationalResourceDirectory.pdf)

**Complementing physical best practices:**

While physical preventive guidelines (regular hand-washing, physical distancing and regular home sanitizing) have been communicated frequently, mental well-being preventive guidelines have not. It is also very important to protect your well-being during this crisis.

**The CDC and numerous other mental health authorities recommend taking the following steps:**

* **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 feelings with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships and build a strong support system.
* **Take breaks** – Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Try taking in deep breaths. Try to do activities you usually enjoy.
* **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 local government authorities.
* **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 its impact. Focus on enjoyable activities and return to normal life as much as possible, checking for updates less frequently.

And most importantly, if you experience these feelings or behaviors for several days in a row and are unable to carry out normal responsibilities because of them, [seek professional help](http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline), just as you would when experiencing the physical symptoms related to COVID-19.

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp>

**Additional Resources:**

**WEBSITES:**

CDC [Mental Health & Coping During COVID-19](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.cdc.gov_coronavirus_2019-2Dncov_prepare_managing-2Dstress-2Danxiety.html-3FCDC-5FAA-5FrefVal-3Dhttps-253A-252F-252Fwww.cdc.gov-252Fcoronavirus-252F2019-2Dncov-252Fabout-252Fcoping.html&d=DwMFAg&c=byefhD2ZumMFFQYPZBagUCDuBiM9Q9twmxaBM0hCgII&r=lhmEHafnneRbs-VH8Uu-8hScscPdM2D-hSwtcp-cbpA&m=r7j_OVzBPMAjvuZgV0Aia6A8SSsCV1gHTppEga7jBks&s=rBbZM9i1xtBdPtza-zxJrcpeooQ0YDw5VZLTJFojyt8&e=)

CDC [Stigma and Resilience During COVID-19](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.cdc.gov_coronavirus_2019-2Dncov_symptoms-2Dtesting_reducing-2Dstigma.html-3FCDC-5FAA-5FrefVal-3Dhttps-253A-252F-252Fwww.cdc.gov-252Fcoronavirus-252F2019-2Dncov-252Fabout-252Frelated-2Dstigma.html&d=DwMFAg&c=byefhD2ZumMFFQYPZBagUCDuBiM9Q9twmxaBM0hCgII&r=lhmEHafnneRbs-VH8Uu-8hScscPdM2D-hSwtcp-cbpA&m=r7j_OVzBPMAjvuZgV0Aia6A8SSsCV1gHTppEga7jBks&s=uT2-UF9IvVekJ37aSxEuz3Ot0QFlLA_KtzHbWstXD_U&e=)

CDC [Taking Care of Your Emotional Health; Coping with Disaster or Trauma](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__emergency.cdc.gov_coping_selfcare.asp&d=DwMFAg&c=byefhD2ZumMFFQYPZBagUCDuBiM9Q9twmxaBM0hCgII&r=lhmEHafnneRbs-VH8Uu-8hScscPdM2D-hSwtcp-cbpA&m=r7j_OVzBPMAjvuZgV0Aia6A8SSsCV1gHTppEga7jBks&s=lKe5a5TlxM2OaYMsBx2JJxUjcU6fMIYNmo6U6dxPWmI&e=)

CDC [Helping Children Cope with Emergencies](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.cdc.gov_childrenindisasters_helping-2Dchildren-2Dcope.html&d=DwMFAg&c=byefhD2ZumMFFQYPZBagUCDuBiM9Q9twmxaBM0hCgII&r=lhmEHafnneRbs-VH8Uu-8hScscPdM2D-hSwtcp-cbpA&m=r7j_OVzBPMAjvuZgV0Aia6A8SSsCV1gHTppEga7jBks&s=Fh68XdFFFRIN9VMaTeXBauamX-aqeYfBM-mQeyC9DEc&e=)

**OTHER RESOURCES**

NAMI  [COVID-19 Info and Resources for Mental Health Concerns](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.nami.org_getattachment_About-2DNAMI_NAMI-2DNews_2020_NAMI-2DUpdates-2Don-2Dthe-2DCoronavirus_COVID-2D19-2DUpdated-2DGuide-2D1.pdf-3Flang-3Den-2DUS&d=DwMFAg&c=byefhD2ZumMFFQYPZBagUCDuBiM9Q9twmxaBM0hCgII&r=lhmEHafnneRbs-VH8Uu-8hScscPdM2D-hSwtcp-cbpA&m=r7j_OVzBPMAjvuZgV0Aia6A8SSsCV1gHTppEga7jBks&s=N3ifTN8u7-uRjPuEV4uokaTw5kohEVaGrmwdt98loGc&e=)

Section: “I’m quarantined or working from home – lonely and isolated – what can I do?”

P.3 has online support groups

**OTHER ARTICLES**

AARP [Families Concerned About Loved Ones in Nursing Homes, Assisted Living](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.samhsa.gov_sites_default_files_tips-2Dsocial-2Ddistancing-2Dquarantine-2Disolation-2D031620.pdf&d=DwMFAg&c=byefhD2ZumMFFQYPZBagUCDuBiM9Q9twmxaBM0hCgII&r=lhmEHafnneRbs-VH8Uu-8hScscPdM2D-hSwtcp-cbpA&m=r7j_OVzBPMAjvuZgV0Aia6A8SSsCV1gHTppEga7jBks&s=mCfkJYS5ruVLZyvEnznbsCBiPJvD6h9Jaakm16eM9Fg&e=)

AARP [How to Fight the Social Isolation of Coronavirus](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.aarp.org_health_conditions-2Dtreatments_info-2D2020_coronavirus-2Dsocial-2Disolation-2Dloneliness.html-3Fintcmp-3DAE-2DHP-2DTTN-2DR2-2DPOS2-2DREALPOSS-2DTODAY&d=DwMFAg&c=byefhD2ZumMFFQYPZBagUCDuBiM9Q9twmxaBM0hCgII&r=lhmEHafnneRbs-VH8Uu-8hScscPdM2D-hSwtcp-cbpA&m=r7j_OVzBPMAjvuZgV0Aia6A8SSsCV1gHTppEga7jBks&s=WRtTSYyQ31nhxrhi0L6Bq_Cs7n3Q4gO6AGhP6oPCl18&e=)

AARP [7 Ways to Cope with Anxiety During the Coronavirus Outbreak](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.aarp.org_health_healthy-2Dliving_info-2D2020_coronavirus-2Danxiety.html&d=DwMFAg&c=byefhD2ZumMFFQYPZBagUCDuBiM9Q9twmxaBM0hCgII&r=lhmEHafnneRbs-VH8Uu-8hScscPdM2D-hSwtcp-cbpA&m=r7j_OVzBPMAjvuZgV0Aia6A8SSsCV1gHTppEga7jBks&s=YHuodPCL2HMZUUys1pCzN5363zu66a7YtzvZvSClgfc&e=)

NCTSN [Parent Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with COVID-19](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.nctsn.org_sites_default_files_resources_fact-2Dsheet_outbreak-5Ffactsheet-5F1.pdf&d=DwMFAg&c=byefhD2ZumMFFQYPZBagUCDuBiM9Q9twmxaBM0hCgII&r=lhmEHafnneRbs-VH8Uu-8hScscPdM2D-hSwtcp-cbpA&m=r7j_OVzBPMAjvuZgV0Aia6A8SSsCV1gHTppEga7jBks&s=qJaIOrnRb3QoXZVa8btJU45aTitjErM0E1khD9rhKJo&e=)

5 pages (see pp. 4-5 for Self-Care Coping and Helping Children Cope)

This information has been provided as an informational resource for NFP clients and business partners. It is intended to provide general guidance, and is not intended to address specific risk scenarios. Regarding insurance coverage questions, each specific policy must be reviewed in its entirety to determine the extent, if any, of coverage available for the impact of the Coronavirus. If you have questions, please reach out to your NFP contact.