

Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks

Riverside University Health System – Behavioral Health supports the behavioral health and wellbeing of Riverside County. We realize that news of the outbreak of an infectious disease can raise concerns and increase the stress of everyday life – even though the location of the outbreak may be far away, and you fully understand that there is a very low risk of getting sick. These are very normal reactions and these concerns can become larger if you have family and friends in parts of the world experiencing the outbreak or if you know of people who are doing extensive travel.

It is important to remember that you need to care for your own physical and mental health at times like this – and that support and resources are available if you feel a need for help or talk to someone.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP COPE WITH EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

1. Manage Your Stress

- Stay informed. Refer to credible sources for updates on the local situation.
- Stay focused on your personal strengths.
- Maintain a routine.
- Make time to relax and rest.

2. Be Informed and Inform Your Family

- Become familiar with local medical and mental health resources in your community. Attend community meetings for resources/education.
- Avoid sharing unconfirmed news about the infectious disease to avoid creating unnecessary fear and panic.
- Give honest age-appropriate information to children and remember to stay calm; children often feel what you feel.

3. Connect with Your Community

- Keep contact with family and friends.
- Join community and/or faith groups.
- Accept help from family, friends, co-workers and clergy.
- Reach out to neighbors and friends with special needs who may need your help.

4. Reach Out and Help

- If you know someone affected by the outbreak, call them to see how they are doing, and remember to keep their confidentiality.
- Consider an act of kindness for those who have been asked to practice social distancing, such as having a meal delivered or offering to drop off homework at their doorstep.
- Locate and volunteer at a charity or organization near you.
- Encourage friends and family to get involved with you.

5. Be Sensitive

- Avoid blaming anyone or assuming someone has the disease because of the way they look or where they or their families come from.
- An infectious disease is not connected to any racial or ethnic group; speak up in kindness when you hear false rumors or negative stereotypes that foster racism and xenophobia.

Consider seeking professional help if you or a loved one are having difficulty coping.



Be Proactive!

1. Stay informed with information from credible sources.
2. Stay connected with friends, family, and community groups.
3. Help others in need by volunteering and donating time and resources to trusted organizations.
4. Keep a positive attitude

Resources

- [Call 2-1-1](#) referrals for health and social services
- Behavioral Health CARES Line (800) 706-7500
- Substance Use CARES Line (800) 499-3008
- [24/7 Mental Health Urgent Care](#)
 - Riverside (951) 509-2499
 - Palm Springs (442) 268-7000
 - Perris (951) 349-4195

Riverside University Health System - Public Health

www.rivcoph.org/

or call 2-1-1 for more information