

11 April 2020

## **RECOMMENDATIONS ON MAINTAINING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

### **Building psychological resilience**

Since we are going through an intense period of obscurity and uncertainty, it is quite normal for complex emotions to arise. Remember that you are not alone. The whole world is going through a similar process, we think and feel alike. During this period, it is important to get information from official and reliable sources regardless of age in order to protect ourselves and increase our resilience. Being exposed to a lot of news and spending the whole day with this issue would increase anxiety. It would be better to get enough information in a limited time.

It is important to meet the basic needs primarily during this period for those over the age of 65 who cannot leave the house. You should remember that these limitations are set for protecting your health. You should not hesitate to ask for help from your children, neighbors or institutions and organizations, if you can.

It is important to pay attention to physical health in order to increase psychological resilience; eat healthy, adopt good sleep habits, stay away from substances such as alcohol, tobacco, etc. Try to move around the house, do the daily chores and take care of yourself. You can think of in-house activities that you like to do. Although we cannot be physically together, it will be good to communicate with our loved ones by phone or online, and to share our feelings or to chat on different topics. When you feel emotionally intense, remind yourself that these shall pass. Try to do activities that will relax you. Try to relax, breathe, if possible, go out on the balcony or look out the window. Try to dream about the future and think positively.

### **In-house activities to protect your mental health**

- Social isolation does not mean drifting apart from relationships all together. You can stay in touch with your loved ones by phone or online.
- Being subject to news and social media for a long time is not good. Getting information from trusted sources at certain times would be appropriate.

- Do not hesitate to express your feelings during this time. There are many ways to express feelings. Chatting, drawing, listening to music, singing, writing might help.
- Maintaining your old routines or establishing new routines may make you feel good.
- Doing house chores without wearing yourself out, cooking, spending time in the kitchen may be good for you.
- You can use this time to do the things you had been postponing for a long time.
- If you are working from home, try to create a work area for yourself. Maintain a routine similar to that of at the office. Setting a limit to your work hours, if you can, might be good for you. Be sure to take breaks.
- Being active at home, keeping up with daily chores, doing exercises may help you feel better.
- This time might be a good opportunity to watch the movies you want to watch or read the books you want to read.
- If you have children, it will be a good opportunity to spend time together. Doing age-appropriate activities with them, playing, baking, watching movies together would make you feel good as a family.
- Try to do exercises to help you relax. Take deep breaths, try to focus in the moment. There are many resources online to help you with this.

### **Measures to protect mental health in the long run**

We think that this period will cause many changes in our lives. These changes will also have psychological implications. Physical changes and losses can bring sadness and many negative feelings. During this period where uncertainty prevails and control is out of our hands, it may feel better to focus on what we can control, rather than what we cannot. We may not be able to control what is happening, but we can control our in-home routines, our own hygiene and what we do. Again, during this period, we can focus on what we can do, rather than focusing on what we think we missed, or we did not do.

Continuing to produce, taking time for yourselves, and learning new things can make you feel better afterwards. It is very normal to be away from many things and to miss them, but certainly there are things that make you feel good and thankful at the moment. Thinking about these would make you feel good. When you feel your anxiety increases, breathing,

trying to return to the moment you are in and unwinding and giving your attention to something different can help you relax.

As mentioned above, doing activities at home that make you feel good, not being exposed to the news too much, reading the disturbing images or writings repeatedly would be protective in the long term.

Remember that you can seek for psychological help during this time and later. If you think that you have difficulty in coping with intense feelings and that your daily functioning is getting out of hand, do not hesitate to consult an expert.

Wishing you good health and happiness,  
Psychological Development and Counselling Center