



U P A C

MENTAL HEALTH 101

The COVID-19 Pandemic has added many stressors to our lives. Coping with stress in a healthy way will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

GENERAL SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Feelings of numbness, disbelief, anxiety or fear
- Change in appetite, energy and activity level
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares and upsetting thoughts and images
- Physical Reactions: Headaches, body pains, stomach aches and skin rashes
- Feelings of anger or becoming more short-tempered
- Increase use of alcohol, tobacco or other substances

YOUTH SPECIFIC SIGNS

- Children are at the prime of their cognitive and social development. The brain is growing and requires new and constant stimulation.
- There may be disruption of homes and separation from school, family, and friends, which could create a great amount of stress and anxiety for children.
- With the feelings of loss, children may start looking for ways to have a sense of control. They may start engaging in more power struggles or avoidance in addition to the other signs adults show too.

OLDER ADULT SPECIFIC SIGNS

- Older adults are facing more isolation than before due to the Stay-at-Home orders.
- Look for sudden changes in character, behavior or functioning. Physical complaints, change, pains or discomforts.
- They could become disoriented, irritable, “snappy”, or more forgetful than usual.
- Check for inability to easily manage tasks such as handling money, getting food, dressing, bathing and securing housing could occur due to added stress.
- Potential overwhelming thoughts of the past or fear of the future may arise.

CULTURALLY SPECIFIC

- An increased financial responsibility to family members outside the household can lead to obsessive worrying with job loss and financial hardship.
- Immigrants and refugees may be reluctant to using resources, for fear of impacting immigration status. (IT DOES NOT!)
- There may be increased isolation due to reduced interactions with extended family.
- Potential feelings of lack of control – Ex: punishment from God due to indiscretions
- Asian Specific: Increased feelings of exhaustion from elevated fears of harm due to Xenophobia

LGBTQ+ SPECIFIC

- Outside of the home may have been a place where LGBTQ+ people could be their real self and now that isn't an option.
- Home can be unsafe for many LGBTQ+ people. They may be isolating more. Physical isolation can cut off positive social interactions.
- Some may have been waiting to leave the house before disclosing, but new financial instability may have disrupted that plan.
- Loneliness, anxiety, depression and thoughts of death and self harm can increase due to the pressure of staying silent due to fear.
- Concerns of discrimination within the health system can stop people from seeking treatment



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HOW TO SUPPORT YOURSELF

- Check the facts but also take a break from the news. The information you get from your family and friends may create more anxiety and worry.
- Take care of your body: Food is often a way for people to deal with things. Some of your comfort food may be healthy and some may be unhealthy. That's ok! Don't feel like you have to deprive yourself of all comfort food. Try to eat regularly and have balanced meals throughout the week.
- Take time to connect: Connect via the telephone. Call old friends or distance family members you always meant to talk to but were too busy to.
- Get outside: Go the park or take walks with others. Be sure to wear a mask and social distance if you're not from the same household.
- Privacy can be hard sometimes. Schedule a time where everyone in your household can engage in their own activity.
- Do the healthy things you enjoy or try new activities you've been wanting to try. Examples: Painting, coloring, yoga, hiking, biking.
- Create a routine or schedule that works for you and your family. Structure and routine can bring feelings of safety and security. Remember to still enjoy yourselves so alternate play and work.
- Practice compassion and patience for yourself and for your family. Things are really hard for all of us right now. Stay positive and forgiving with one another. People learn from examples.
- Set small goals to accomplish daily and celebrate those small accomplishments! Ex: shower and get ready in the morning, wipe down the table, go get the mail, call a friend or family member, etc.
- Don't forget to Laugh- it promotes breathing exercises crucial to one's health, it's easy, can be done alone or with others and is safe regardless of physical abilities.
- Consider getting a pet companion to keep you company and provide you comfort and love!
- Connect with spiritual outlets and consider engaging with your religious services online, if that is part of your typical routine.
- Use medications as prescribed and check in with your doctor regularly. Feeling physically and mentally healthy is very important.

For more information on Union of Pan Asian Communities
Mental Health Services, visit us at www.upacsd.com.