Stress and Anxiety During Challenging Times

Greater New Brunswick and Middlesex County

The recent Coronavirus Pandemic has left many people with feelings of stress and anxiety. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children.

Stress

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your health and the health of your family.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Worsening of mental health conditions.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Stress can affect our bodies in different ways, including:

- Chest tightness and feeling like you can't breathe
- Muscle tension, aches, and pains,
- Difficulty sleeping
- Restlessness and an inability to relax
- Heart palpitations
- Digestive issues

Some people cope with stress more effectively than others. It's important to know your limits when it comes to stress. Chronic stress can cause both physical and mental harm.

Anxiety

Fear and anxiety are a normal part of life. Anxiety can be useful because it can make you more alert or careful. This type of anxiety usually ends soon after a person is out of the situation that caused it. People who frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations have anxiety disorders, which can impact their life. If someone has frequent anxiety should seek advice from their doctor.

Healthy Ways of Coping with Stress and Anxiety

- Take care of yourself and your family.
  - Eat healthy, well-balanced meals, if possible
  - Exercise on a regular basis – take a walk or kick around a ball
  - Get plenty of sleep
  - Give yourself a break if you feel stressed out
- Talk to others. Share your problems and how you are feeling and coping with a parent, friend, counselor, doctor, or pastor.
- Unwind and do something you enjoy (for example, doing hobbies, playing games, or reading).
- Keep to a schedule especially if you are working from home.
- Communicate regularly with extended family members.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. These may seem to help, but they can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
- Take a break from listening or watching the news including social media.

Recognize when you need more help. If problems continue seek help from your doctor or one of the help lines listed on the next page.



IN CASE OF EMERGENCY CALL: 911

Help Lines

NJMentalHealthCares Help Line
Behavioral health staff specialists offer help to people dealing with anxiety and worry related to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and other mental health concerns. New Jerseyans may call for free, confidential support. The help line is answered by trained specialists from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week.
Phone: (866) 202-HELP (4357)
Website: https://www.njmentalhealthcares.org/

Disaster Distress Help Line
A 24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories. Stress, anxiety, and other depression-like symptoms are common reactions after a disaster.
Phone: 1-800-985-5990
Text: TalkWithUs to 66746
Website: https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline

Local Resources

Central Jersey Family Health Consortium (CJFHC)
CJFHC is licensed by the N.J. Department of Health and part of a regionalized maternal and child health system. It works to improve the health of women of childbearing age, infants, and children in the region.
Additional Languages: ES
Phone: 732-937-5437
Website: www.cjfhc.org/

NAMI New Jersey
The National Alliance on Mental Illness NJ (NAMI-NJ) is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness. NAMI offers peer-led programs and support groups that provide outstanding free education, skills training and support.
Additional Languages: ES, ZH and some South Asian languages
Phone: 732-940-0991
Website: http://www.naminj.org/

Language Directory:
ES = Spanish
ZH = Chinese

For more information, please see the *Behavioral Health Referral and Resource Guide: Greater New Brunswick and Middlesex County, 2019 Edition* at: http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/BehavioralHealthGuide/

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Healthier Middlesex Working Together

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