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Covid-19: Psychosocial Advice to Patients

Staying in isolation out of fear of contracting COVID-19, waiting for the test result, and the diagnosis itself naturally brings tremendous stress. Uncertainty, coupled with fear for the future, can result from being separated from your loved ones.

All of this can come with a variety of emotions: Fear, sadness, vulnerability, insecurity, helplessness, shame and anxiety about what's coming next. These emotional reactions to the disease are both expected and natural. Being in isolation alone or with your family can magnify these reactions so we need to find ways to protect ourselves, maintain continuity and especially, to find ways to stay connected.

Although we have no control over COVID-19, the good news is that we still have a great deal of control over our own lives and connections with loved ones.

The following are some recommendations that might help improve your sense of control and feelings of security:

- ❖ Avoid over-exposure to information: Keep up with reliable information sources at predetermined and limited times. Focus on relevant/practical guidelines as opposed to the extent of the expansion.
- ❖ Try to keep a routine: Maintain routine habits and a fixed agenda. Although you are isolated, set up regular times for meals, exercise, internet/computer usage, conversation with family and friends, and sleep hours.
- ❖ Maintain roles: Try to preserve balance during this time. Sustain your role as parents, grandparents, employees, friends, etc.
- ❖ Give space and legitimacy to your emotions: Feelings of stress, anxiety, shame, stigma, fear, uncertainty, helplessness, frustration, loneliness, and guilt surround the illness. These feelings are all legitimate. They can also be expressed in physical and/or emotional reactions.
- ❖ Talk openly with your loved ones: When in distress you should share this with those close to you or seek professional help.
- ❖ Try to identify what has helped you in the past: to overcome other challenging times; use the same tools/approach to cope with the current crisis.



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- ❖ Adopt relaxation techniques: there are various methods involving breathing, music, and the like. Training videos can be used and are readily available on-line.
- ❖ Connect to your circles of support: Focus on the areas of your life that have not been affected, focus on what gives you a sense of ability and control. Talk to your friends who share similar experiences and you will discover that you are not alone. Share with each other and learn what helps others
- ❖ Stay active and be involved: Create a sense of security in others and strengthen your sense of control and ability; others will learn from you and learn from your example.
- ❖ Make time for yourself - It is recommended that you engage in activities that promote your wellbeing, such as: sport (following your doctor's advice) reading, music, hobbies, crafts, cooking, etc.
- ❖ Take care of yourself: pay attention to your body, behavior and feelings. Notice which tools you use for coping and use them frequently.

Remember that a crisis is also an opportunity.

We wish you a speedy recovery and a complete return to your routine.