

Worry, Stress and Anxiety: Coping, Staying Healthy and Benefitting from Life's Challenges

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Worry



- The importance of worry
 - › Problem Solving
- The commonality of worry



- Its evolutionary origins: caution
 - › Taking Action
- Control
 - › Children – normal worry

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Stress



- The physiological necessity of stress
 - Inverted U-curve shape
 - It's evolutionary origins: threat response (fight or flight)
 - The spectrum of stressor to allostatic load
 - Epigenetics: Can impact our DNA through methylation
 - The role of cortisol
- Potential current stressors:
 - › Health
 - › Isolation
 - › Job security
 - › Economic (local economies/financial markets)
 - › Media coverage
 - › Uncertain and unpredictable outcomes
 - › Other...

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STRESSOR: Pandemic (CDC)



Health-related fear



Worsening of chronic health problems



Sleep problems



Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, other drugs



Eating problems



Isolation

- 50% of 20K responders reported feeling lonely (Cigna Survey)



Concentration problems

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Isolation

- Isolation and loneliness can lead to depression
- Depression shortens lives
 - › Suppresses the immune system
 - › Shortens survival time in CA (Spiegel)
 - › Link to heart disease is twice as harmful as obesity, smoking 15 cigarettes a day, or alcohol abuse. (Brigham Young Univ)
 - › Hence, physical separation BUT emotional and mental connectedness is essential. Encourage smart use of social media and phone calls for groups to have non-physical interactions.
 - › When implementing physical separation be:
 - Measured
 - Informed
 - Time-Limited in Orientation
 - Participatory



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Anxiety

- Impact on cognitive process, emotion regulation and executive function
- Prevalence: 40M in US (ADAA)
- Importance of identifying trigger for anxiety, if there is one
- We all react differently to stress
 - › Background, history, community, family history...
 - › Those more at risk to react strongly:
 - Older/Chronic Illness
 - Children and Teens
 - Health and First Responders
 - People with MH conditions
 - People with Substance abuse



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Common signs of Distress

Feelings of numbness,
disbelief, fear

Changes in appetite,
energy, activity levels

Difficulty concentrating

Difficulty sleeping or
nightmare and upsetting
thoughts and images

Physical reactions;
headaches, body pains,
stomach problems and
skin rashes

Worsening of chronic
health problems

Anger or short-temper

Increased use of
alcohol, tobacco or
other drugs

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Negative Thoughts/Positive Thoughts

- Negative thoughts are automatic
 - › Primates – social for 30M years
 - › Stress – hundreds of millions of years
- Positive thoughts need to be practiced
- A cycle of negative thoughts can be interrupted by positive thoughts
 - › It requires conscious effort
 - Ex: Milder cases are less infectious (Science)
 - › Cognitive tricks:
 - Challenge the negative thoughts and all or none thinking
 - Face the thought, don't avoid it, but don't dwell on it either

If cycle not interrupted



Poor decision making/
attributions

Shaming or blaming
(xenophobia)



Economic hardship

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How to safeguard our people and ourselves:

Listen

- With attention and non-judgement (mindfulness)
- Stay informed
- When enforcing guidelines, be sensitive about anxiety, anger or frustration about not being in control of one's safety and health.

Promote

Self care

- › Exercise
 - Yoga (combines exercise with mindfulness)
- › Diet
- › Social Interactions

Protect

Communicate safety and security

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How to safeguard our people and ourselves:

Model

- › Self-compassion
- › Self-care

Get involved

- › Responsive together – community
- › Sense of control – taking action
- › Ask for help
- › Connect

People with pre-existing MH conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms.

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Self-Care



Take breaks from watching, listening or reading news



Connect with others



Time to unwind: activities you enjoy



Call your health care provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row

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RESOURCES

- **SAMHSA Hotline**
1-800-985-5990 or Text "Talk With Us" to 66746
- **PURE EDGE**
<http://pureedgeinc.org/>
Free self-care resources in English and Spanish
- **Brain Breaks, A Peek Inside the Amazing Brain, K-5 Resources, virtual PE Classes**
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dw5h9gr4nubw1xs/AACQI2Jl4O9e2JscN27-h48Pa?dl=0>
- **Virtual Meditation Webinar**
Stanford's Early Life Stress and Resilience Program in partnership with Pure Edge, Inc. will be hosting a live daily 30min guided meditation Monday - Friday from 1 pm - 1:30 pm. Link to Virtual Webinar (requires download of zoom application)
<https://stanford.zoom.us/j/755370337>
- **Stanford's Early Life Stress and Resilience Program (ELSRP)**
ELSRP continues to provide resource materials related to the COVID-19 Outbreak
<http://med.stanford.edu/elspap.html>
- **Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences:**
resources and information specifically related to COVID-19:
<https://med.stanford.edu/psychiatry/intranet/covid19.html>
- **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:**
<https://www.aacap.org/>
- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network:**
<https://www.nctsn.org/>
- **Stanford Children's Health:**
<https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/>

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What to watch for on kids...

- Increased crying or irritation
- Returning to behaviors they had outgrown
- Excessive sadness
- Unhealthy eating
- Irritability/"acting-out" in teens
- Difficulty with attention/concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pains
- Use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs
- Pre-schoolers: may get more clingy or regress on their behaviors
- school-age kids may complain of stomach aches or headaches (they somatize), and
- adolescents may become withdrawn and not wanting to talk. It is important to recognize these reactions and address them.

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If recently released from quarantine watch for:

- Mixed emotions
- Health-related fear
- Stress associated with monitoring by others/self
- Sadness, anger and frustration about friends/loved ones
- unfounded fears of contracting illness even when they have been determined not to be contagious
- Guilt about not performing work or parenting duties
- Other emotional or mental health changes

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Talking to kids about Covid-19:



Be clear, direct and succinct.



The conversation needs to be open.



Children need to know that it is your job to keep them safe and secure and that you are competent and confident in doing so.



While kids are at home limit TV coverage related to crisis. It is important to stay informed, but they don't need to follow all.



Play is a key development activity for children; encourage their creativity by engaging them in appropriate virtual socializing, social distancing games (e.g.; flashlight tag).

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Talking to kids about Covid-19:



Encourage art to express their feelings. The latter is particularly important for very young children who may be very concrete in their thinking and limited in their vocabulary.



As a general rule, children just want to know what they are asking. If you don't know the answer, tell them you'll look it up.

Reliable Internet Sites:



American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: <https://www.aacap.org/>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network: <https://www.nctsn.org/>

Stanford Children's Health: <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/>

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Talking to kids 3:



Caretakers can model to youth how deep breathing and focused attention to the moment without judgement (mindfulness) are true antidotes to stress.



Empowering them with exercise tools that they can utilize when worried or anxious can empower them to feel more able to ask questions, and to parents on how to address them.



A good internet resource is Pure Edge. They offer a number of important “brain-breaks” that help youth and adults alike (<http://pureedgeinc.org/>)

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Talking to Kids 4:



Children love to be creative. Very young children can develop games around proper hand-washing with the assistance of adults (for example, play pretend that you are a surgeon).



Older kids may want to write about their opinion and feelings and keep a journal.



It is important here to note that social distancing is really only physical, socially and emotionally we should encourage everyone to remain connected.

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What to do:

Take time to talk

Reassure Safety

Limit exposure

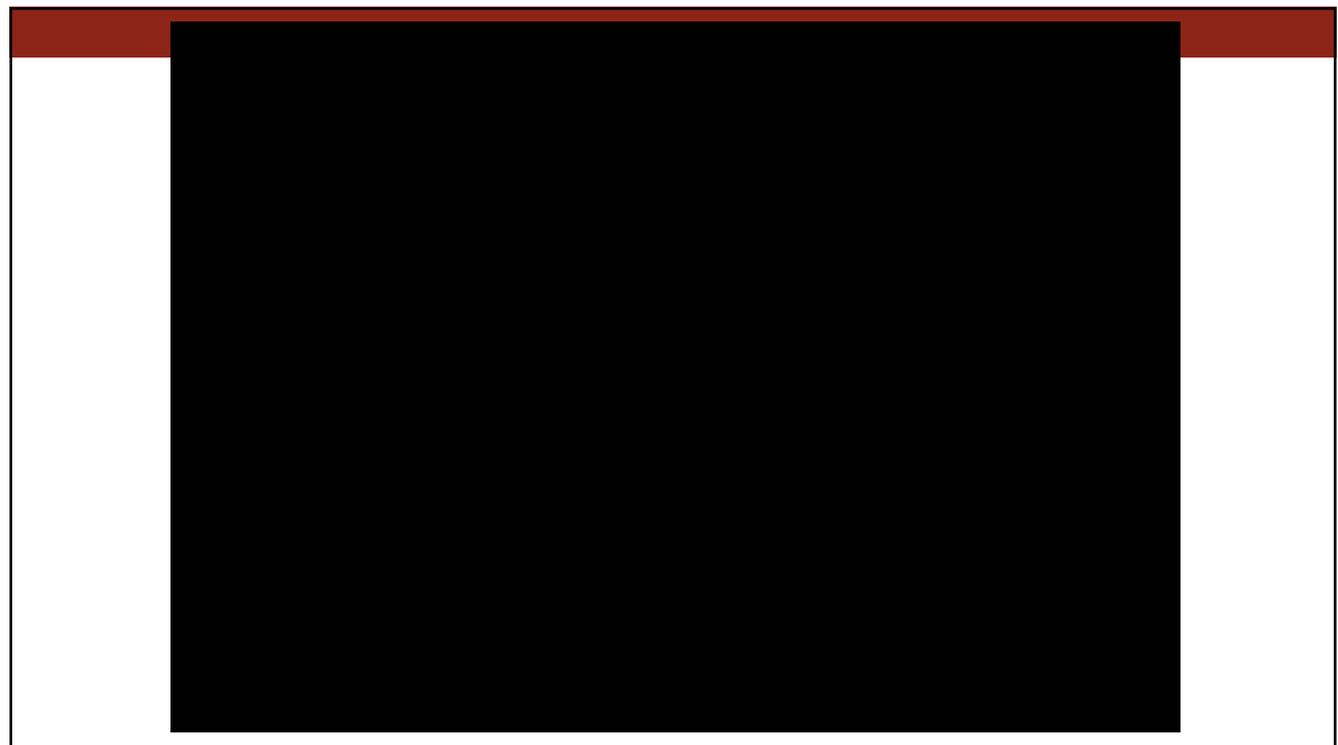
Structure;
regular routines

Be a role model
of self-care

The Pure Power Curriculum: <https://pureedgeinc.org/curriculum/>



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