

Mental Health and the COVID-19 Crisis **(submitted by a member of the CARE team March 18, 2020)**

We are all facing a new situation with the declaration of COVID19 as a pandemic. This is a confusing and unsettling time for all of us as we try to understand this health issue and prepare ourselves to make the changes that allow us and others to be safe. Most health experts have assured us that we should not panic as we respond... rather we should use good health promotion practices such as hand washing, keeping sneezes and coughs covered, limiting interactions in large groups., limiting international travel, and isolating those who are suffering from the virus until they are not infectious. Our health professionals have made many new recommendations in terms of attendance in large gatherings and how to handle possible positive diagnoses of the virus.

The widespread effect of this virus has many other implications including economic ones including our personal income and financial status and that of our larger economic system.

What can we do to keep our anxiety to a manageable level at this time?

- Keep connected with accurate information about the virus
- Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories. Try to do some other activities you enjoy to return to your normal life.
- If you have special needs with respect to health issues be especially vigilant in your contacts with others and your own personal health practices
- Set up a contact list for yourself so that you are not handling this issue alone – find a group to talk to, share your concerns with a friend or family member, call each other to check on each other's well being, send emails to encourage each other, be aware of sharp changes in your mental health and seek out help if you need it
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive outcome
- Reassure children that they are safe, answer questions to children at the level they can understand
- Let children know it is ok if they are upset but share how you deal with stress and how they might do so as well
- Pray for all of us as we seek God's care and hope for the future

- Maintain self care practices, good nutrition, good sleep patterns.

We are all in this situation together and the solution depends on all of us.

If you are placed in isolation, follow the guidelines for your recovery but if you are feeling well and only suffering from “stir craziness” you could also make the time one that has some positive elements. Read a book you have always wanted to read, listen to music or practice if you are a musician, clean a few drawers, sort family photographs , do some of the things on your “to do “ list that you have been putting off.

We are all in this crisis together and together we will be able to assist each other in managing its effects on our lives.

Another resource:

From the US Centers for Disease Control: <https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html>