



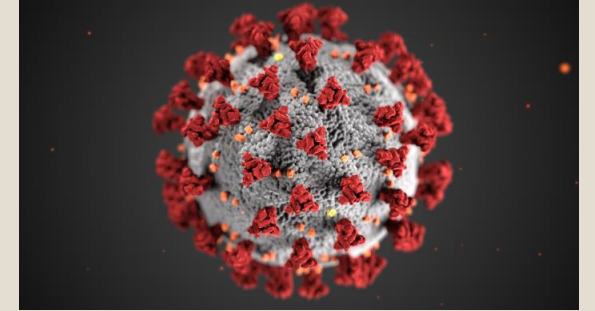
# COPING WITH COVID-19

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May 17, 2020  
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# Objectives

- Provide brief description of COVID-19
- Acknowledge the many stressors associated with COVID-19
- Discuss reactions and the impact of both acute and chronic stress
- Discuss managing stress
- Introduce principles of Positive Psychology and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy as a framework in managing stress
- Guided Imagery Exercise

# COVID-19



- **What is COVID-19?**
- COVID-19 is a respiratory illness spreading around the world and it is caused by a coronavirus first identified in 2019.
- The virus has found to be most easily spread between people who are in close contact with one another through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- People are most contagious at the peak of their illness
  - However, people can still pass the virus on to others even when not symptomatic.
- There is currently no vaccine or cure for COVID-19.
- The most common symptoms are similar to other viruses: fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.
  - For the most up to date symptom list, visit the CDC's website.

# Stressors during COVID-19

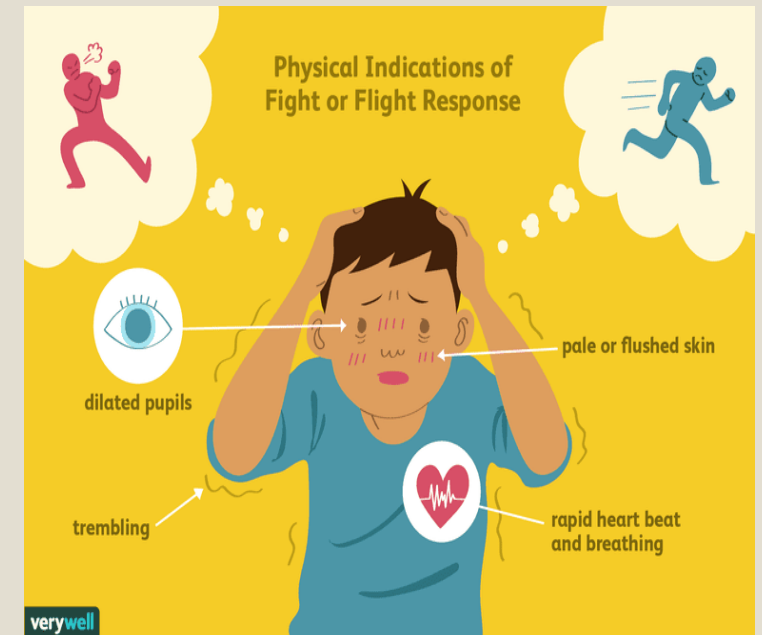
- Concern about the Virus
- Loss of Family, Friends, and People in the Community
- Altered Daily Routine (Sleep and Eating Changes)
- Job Loss/Financial Strain
- Food Shortages
- Social Isolation and Loneliness
- "Lost Time" and Cancellation of Important Life Events
- Worsening of Chronic Health Problems (Delaying Care due to COVID-19 Restrictions)
- Worsening of Previous Mental Health Conditions
- Excessive Media Exposure (Misinformation)
- **Loss of Control!**



CDC, 2020 and NIMH, 2020

# Reaction to Stress

- Stress: The way we respond to demand.
  - “Fight-or-Flight” Response
    - Respond to threat with physical, cognitive, and behavioral activation
- Although Unpleasant, this Response is Adaptive and Normal.



# Signs of Acute and Chronic Stress

- **Physical Signs**

- Difficulty Sleeping or Excessive Sleep
- Loss of Appetite or Overeating
- Headaches/Neck Tension, GI Distress
- Low Libido

- **Cognitive Signs**

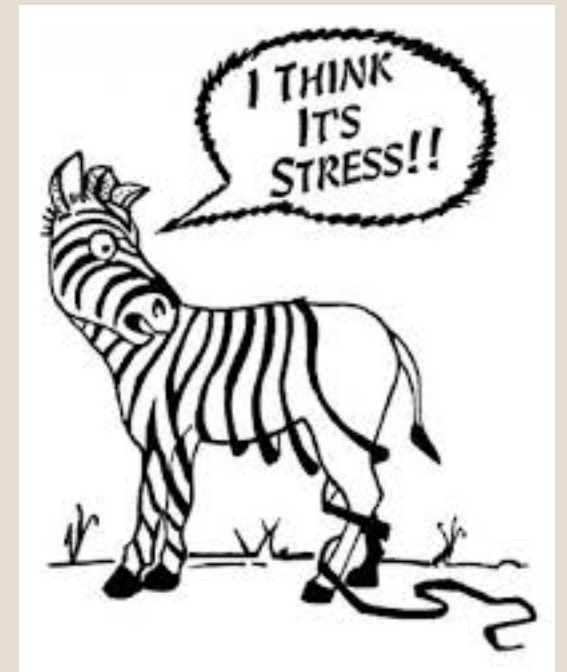
- Difficulty Concentrating/ “Feeling Foggy”
    - Difficulty Making Decisions

- **Emotional/Behavioral Signs**

- Irritability or Feeling “On Edge”
    - Increased tearfulness or exaggeration emotional responses
    - Increased use of substances (alcohol, drugs, tobacco)
    - Feeling Overwhelmed
    - Low Self-Esteem

# Impact of Acute Stress and Chronic Stress

- Acute and chronic stress have been associated with immune system suppression.
- Chronic stress is associated with cardiovascular disease, headaches, lack of sleep, and lack of motivation.
- Can impact ability to handle acute stress due to depletion of emotional resources.



# Strategies for Managing Stress

- **Take care of physical health.**

- Get good sleep.
- Exercise at home or while maintaining social distancing outside (i.e. walking, home exercise videos, etc).
- Try to eat healthy well-balanced meals
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, and illegal substances.

- **Maintain a routine at home.**

- Create a daily schedule.
  - Wake up the same time, eats meals around the same time, schedule time to connect to non-screen activities and even schedule your TV time, so it remains limited.
- Maintain your hygiene and change your clothes.
- Create a separate workspace at home that is **NOT YOUR BED.**
- Have a routine before sleeping to wind down and help improve initiation of sleep.





# Strategies for Managing Stress

- **Limit access to news and information.**
  - Try to eliminate misinformation by identifying a credible news source.
  - Check news briefly and no more than two times a day.
  - Limit Screen time (especially 30 minutes before bed).
  - Avoid distressing images before bed.
- **Stay Connected!**
  - Socialize virtually by phone or on computer platform (i.e. Zoom).
  - Choose a book to read or recipe to share.
  - Exercise virtually or share exercises.
  - Check In with people who may be more isolated and lonely.
  - Stay connected to your temple!



# Strategies for Managing Stress

- **Manage Immediate Relationships**

- Focus on communication and listening.
- Set specific times to openly talk about disagreements or frustrations.
- Try to use “I” language vs “You” Language

- **Invest in Yourself**

- Don't become overwhelmed with setting unreasonable goals for this time.
- Set reasonable goals each day and outline steps you can take to reach those goals.

# Incorporate Positive Psychology!

- Tap into your natural resiliency.
- **Acknowledge** your negative thoughts but bring your **focus** to positive ones.
- Write down **three positive things or things you are grateful for** occurring in your life.
- Identify a **personal strength** and use it in a new way during this time.
- Challenge **negative and irrational thoughts**.
- Create a **list of positive thoughts and memories** that you can refer to when feeling overwhelmed with negative thoughts.
- Recognize the signs of an impending **strong emotional response**
  - Pause and take deep breaths.

# Incorporate Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

**F** = Focus on what's in your control

**A** = Acknowledge your thoughts & feeling

**C** = Come back into your body

**E** = Engage in what you're doing

**C** = Committed action

**O** = Opening up

**V** = Values

**I** = Identify resources

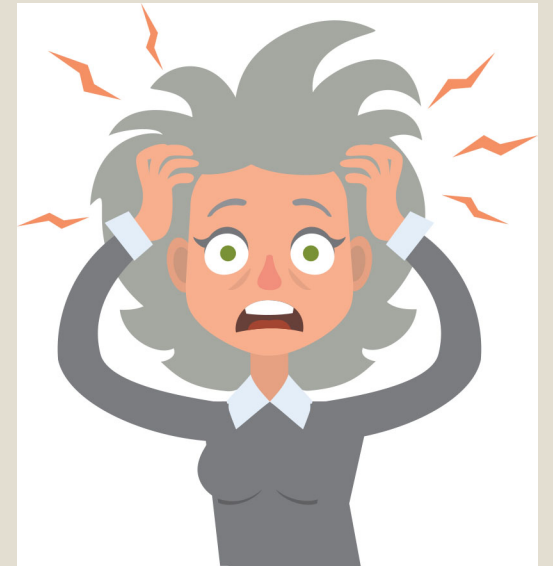
**D** = Disinfect & distance

# Stress and Children

- Model positive coping for children and adolescents.
- Teach them how to manage stress and anxiety calmly and confidently and maintain self-care.
- Remind children and adolescents that they are safe.
- Give space for them to share feelings, concerns, and questions.
- Validate their feelings and let them know their feelings are normal.
- Set a regular routine or schedule, including learning and fun activities.

# Older Adults

- High vulnerability to COVID
- Increased risk for loneliness and isolation.
- Caregiver Burden
- Financial Concerns
- Sadness over “Lost Time”



Harvard Health Publishing,

# Resources

- <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/current-events/supporting-your-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>
- [https://thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/mental\\_health\\_support\\_while\\_home](https://thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/mental_health_support_while_home)
- Visit the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#)<sup>external icon</sup>, call 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746
- Visit the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)<sup>external icon</sup> or call 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224
- <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>
- **10 Minute Guided Imagery:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1rRo6cgM\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1rRo6cgM_E)

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