

How to combat COVID stress syndrome

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Covid 19 pandemic overturned everything and is the most challenging time in the history of the world.

No one was ready for these speedily changing and unpredictable times ever in their lives.

The pandemic affected mental health of the people. Everyone reacted differently as per their resilience and coping skills. Few people coped and coping well with psychological issues while other are in a state of anxiousness and panicky. There is another community who does not consider even the existence of coronavirus and think that there are no such health risks.

Our responses to stress during the Coronavirus outbreak can depend on our background, our environment, and support from family or friends, financial position, our physical and mental health etc. The revolution that can take place because of this virus and the manner we attempt to surround the spread of it, can have its impact on anybody.

High risk population includes elderly people and those already having medical or psychiatric issues with poor immune system and frontline healthcare workers.

The objective of this article is to draw attention to those psychological reactions or psychiatric disorders that can affect an individual in the age of Corona virus pandemic.

Stress and Covid 19

Stress crop up when the pressure is greater than the resource. Corona is characterized by a squall of stress through elevated and difficult mental health outcomes. This pandemic brought multiple psychological strains like life became unpredictable, physical distancing, touch deprivation¹ health and life risks, stressful news, and economic losses or bereavement.

Stress can be managed with an acute presentation but with extended duration, these reactions have adverse effects not only on mental health but on physical health and weaken the immune system.²

Anxiety Disorder, Depression and Covid 19

The probability of developing anxiety or depression can rise at some point in the outbreak of corona virus. Fear and stress associated with the pandemic may lessen access to usual life practices like socialization, which is an essential part of life and development. This endorses psychosocial resilience and the overall well-being of an individual.³⁻⁵

Symptoms of depression can be triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Anxiety, stress, worries, and feeling of hopelessness, helplessness due to uncertain situations may cause depression. Lack of physical connectedness and watching or reading more of sad news on media may consequently amplify ponderings and anxiousness that take biological processes in the brain and enhance the risk for developing depression. The risk of suicide may erupt as well.

Not everybody gets affected by psychiatric disorders even if they are exposed to stressful life incidents as they have good resilience to overcome stress and they are emotionally strong. So it is vital to think logically by ignoring rumors about covid19 to prevent from developing psychological issues.

COVID 19 & Drug Abuse/ Dependence

It has been observed that abuse of drugs like smoking either it is nicotine or other forms of substances that may include opiate, enhances the chance of developing severe symptoms of corona virus and may be fatal.⁶⁻⁸ COVID 19 induced stressors, e.g. financial crises, depression due to social isolation, monotony due to lack of outside variety of activities may increase the risk of abusing drugs.⁹

Risk of relapse also there in pandemic like covid as people can't go for treatment due to restrictions of staying at home and this may result into more issues including mental health disorders.

COVID, Schizophrenia and Bipolar Affective Disorder

Psychotic disorders may also rise with stress and relapses may increase.¹⁰

How to Combat COVID Stress Syndrome

To Combat COVID Stress Syndrome there is a strong need to identify and address the covid related mental health issues.

There are suggestions for overcoming

1. **Connect yourself with knowledge:** Avoid viewing or reading sensational news or social media, where facts are often blurred or exaggerated. Replace this with authentic sources like news from the health ministry, or WHO. The fact –based news will help connect you to a reality where truth, hope, and interventions exist.
2. **Keep a physical not Social distance:** Guard yourself with physical distance and homebound activities. But make sure to keep your socialization and bonding to friends, family, and loved ones by calling, texting, using Face Time or Skype.
3. **Think about what is in the vicinity not internationally:** Pay attention to only what is happening in your vicinity and how can you help yourself and your neighbors staying protective and healthy. Empathy about society is fundamental for passing through distressing situations and builds coping skills in the community.
4. **Strengthening relationships:** will go a long way in alleviating distress. A supportive relationship is protective.
5. **Adopt Healthy Life Style:** Consume healthy food, maintain sleep hygiene, be aware of your stress factors, do exercise, and practice relaxing techniques. Avoid drug abuse, carbonated drinks. Limit caffeine and nicotine intake, as it increases anxiety and irritability.
6. **Combat Uncertainty:** The prevailing uncertainty due to pandemic can bring helplessness in many people. Finding purpose in life can lessen agitation and apprehension. Invest in social experience. Focus on things you can control, for example, replace a negative thought with positive ones, deciding what to do in the evening, what new dish can be made, watching movies, reading books, getting busy with family in chitchat, playing games or other activities you have command over.
7. **If apprehensive about having COVID-19:** If you feel unwell and suspect coronavirus, do make contact with a physician. Never go for self-treatment.

8. **Stay informed about locally available healthcare services:** This involves both medical and mental health services and can be online or in person facilities.
9. **Healthy Mind:** Healthy mind brings improvement in our physical health. Taking care of our mental health is a key component of overall health and wellbeing. It has a great impact on our perception, thinking, feeling, and behaving. This is also related to the way individual handle stress, communicates or socializes, and makes decisions in a critical situation.
10. **Making Children understand about Coronavirus:** Parents, caregivers, or other trusted adults should make children understand about this pandemic and provide information based on authenticity, honesty, precisely to reduce the associated fear and anxiety. Make yourself available to children for listening to them and educate them about precautionary measures.
11. **Be kind:** Do help others. Even a smile can makes others day. This is a time for the charity as well. Giving is happiness. Kindness gives you a sense of inner peace and pleasure.
13. **Be Mindful &Practice Relaxation Exercise:** Mindfulness is focusing on the present moment only as the past can drag us to depressive memories and thinking about the future can bring anxiousness.
Follow this simple relaxation exercise: Sit comfortably on a chair. Relax your body and drop your shoulders. Take a deep breath by inhaling through your nose and hold it for ten seconds. Then, after ten seconds exhale through the mouth.
14. **For Doctors:** This excellent time to write papers and plan research.

Conclusion

Addressing mental health is needed more than ever in response to both the acute and enduring psychological impacts of COVID-19. This article is intended to arouse awareness about mental health issues we are exposed to and how it must adapt to meet the demands of a speedily sprouting psychological setting. Understandably, the sustained change will require strong advocacy to deal with mental health challenges following COVID-19. There is a need that mental health professionals must be prepared to raise their voices not only within scientific outlets but also in public discussions on the media as well. The sustained effort, collaboration with other disciplines, and unity within mental health systems will be required to address the complex effects of COVID-19 on people.

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