

Addressing Emotional Needs While You're Sick: Guidance for Individuals

If you are experiencing illness during the COVID-19 outbreak, you may find that you feel worried about your health, your family, and the symptoms you are having. Trying to figure out how to cope with increased stress may create feelings of anxiety like you have never felt before. You are not alone. This document addresses some common signs of stress, along with ways to lessen them.

Know that in these circumstances it is normal to experience some fear and worry. The stress from the illness you are experiencing can trigger distress reactions. Take note of how you are feeling emotionally. Here are some distress reactions to look out for:

- Insomnia – difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Anxiety and feeling afraid
- Feeling unsafe
- Feeling angry
- Placing blame on others for your illness or stress

During times of overwhelming stress, one may start to use unhealthy coping skills, thus making feelings of anxiety and fear worse. Monitor yourself for the following **stress reactions:**

- Increasing use of food, alcohol, tobacco, and other substances
- Feeling no balance between work and life – withdrawing from your family/friends and working more, or feeling like you cannot manage your work duties
- Feeling very isolated and alone
- Family conflicts

If you are experiencing these types of stress reactions and are worried that you are not able to cope, or find yourself relying on unhealthy and risky behaviors, please reach out to your healthcare provider right away. If you are experiencing severe stress, having feelings or actions of violence or suicide seek **immediate** emergency medical attention. Please reach out to your healthcare provider for guidance about your health, concerns about your illness, and mental health services.

While you are recovering from your illness:

- It is normal to feel the way you do during increased times of stress. Many people are feeling this way, and you are not alone.
- Try to recognize your own distress reactions and behaviors. You may want to keep a journal or write down these behaviors as you notice them.
- Reach out for help early if you feel like you are becoming too stressed to take care of yourself or are using risky behaviors to cope. There are people ready and able to help you through this challenging time.
- Create a routine – promote feelings of productivity.
- Stay physically healthy – follow instructions provided by your healthcare provider.

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE STRESS & WORRY

Identify a support network – call when you feel overwhelmed or need to talk to someone about your experience.

Take daily media breaks – it can be overwhelming and focuses on the negative.

Identify other stressors to put on hold while you recover (such as daily work).

Refocus on positive thoughts - think of things that are good, and that you are grateful for.

Practice calming strategies - try meditation or step outside, even for just a few minutes.

Remember you are not alone. If you have concerns about how COVID-19 may be impacting your life, job, and routines, visit the Michigan Department of Health and Human Resources (MDHHS) website for COVID-19 at: Michigan.gov/Coronavirus.

National Disaster Distress Helpline



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