



The Mental Health Association in Forsyth County, Inc.

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Coronavirus and Your Mental Health

Simple, Practical Tips to Cope During this Time of Uncertainty

(Material Adapted from our National Office, Mental Health America)

The number of cases of COVID-19 will increase in our community. There is no doubt about this. In turn, the associated anxiety, coupled with fear of the “unknown” will also increase with each passing day.

The mental health effects of COVID-19 are just as important to address as are the physical health effects. Twenty percent of the population --- one in five children, women and men – currently live with mental health conditions. Of this 20%, approximately 1 in 17 live with severe, life-long mental disorders such as major depression, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizoaffective disorder, schizophrenia and/or a combination. Every cancellation and every disruption in one’s routine, particularly for those living with severe mental illness, will more than likely cause additional anxiety and depression.

There are no easy answers. In the here-and-now, the containing of the spread of COVID-19 is of utmost priority. The health and safety of everyone needs to be taken very seriously.

So, what do we do? How can we all cope? Below are some simple, practical tips to help all of us better cope with anxiety and depression during these uncertain times:

- 1) Use your smart phone or other device to stay connected to family and friends. Shift from texting **to** voice or video calling to feel more connected.
- 2) If you do not have a smart phone – use your landline or flip phone and do the “next best thing” and reach out to supportive people. The “key” is to stay connected with people who support you.
- 3) Family members and neighbors and friends can provide daily or periodic “check-ins” with older family members, church members or neighbors by

phone. Use this time to build relationships. Our older adults have many life stories to share. Use this time to hear their “stories.”

- 4) Keep comfortable. Do the things you already enjoy doing at home; just do more of them.
- 5) Contact a local assistive living or long-term care facility and mail, e-mail “thinking of you” cards, pictures, drawings to residents who live in these facilities as they are now in “lock down.”
- 6) Practice stress relief whenever you feel anxiety building – do some deep breathing, exercise, read, dig in the garden, watch comedy shows, eat some ice cream – do whatever works best for you.
- 7) Practice gratitude. Find a clean, empty jar in your home. Each and every time you are grateful -- for even the slightest little thing -- put a coin or token or pebble in the jar. Before you go to bed at night, count how many times you felt grateful for something that day. Empty the jar and start over.
- 8) Don’t do anything you’d consider to be unhealthy for you, such as excess consumption of alcohol -- that will just increase your feelings of depression and anxiety afterwards.
- 9) Keep looking forward. This will eventually pass. Make some plans for six months down the road.
- 10) Finally . . . unplug! Keep abreast of the news, but . . . make time daily to turn off the TV; turn off 24/7 news; turn off the internet; turn off social media. Set aside some time just to “unplug.”

If you or a loved one needs help with their mental health concerns and are not sure what to do, where to turn, below are some local mental health resources, available **24/7**, that are a phone call away. (**Keep in mind that if the situation is a *medical or life-threatening emergency* then you do need to call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency room.**)

1. **Cardinal Innovations Healthcare**: 1-800-939-5911. Call this number for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis and/or to access services. Serves the residents of Forsyth, Stokes, Davie, Davidson and 16 other Counties in NC who are uninsured or have Medicaid. However, during this time, anyone experiencing a mental health crisis can call this number for help.

2. **Mobile Crisis/Engagement Services**: 1-866-275-9552. Operated by Daymark Recovery Services in Winston-Salem and other service areas. Mobile Crisis Services serves everyone experiencing a mental health crisis in the community, regardless of resources or lack of resources.

3. **Old Vineyard Behavioral Health**: 1-855-234-5920. Call to schedule an appointment, make a referral. Walk-ins welcome and/or referrals from community providers.

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Source: Material adapted from our national office, Mental Health America