

Coping With Stress & Anxiety During An Infectious Disease Outbreak

Behavioral Health Services supports the wellbeing of our County family, friends and colleagues. When you hear, read or watch news about an outbreak of an infectious disease, you may feel anxious and show signs of stress. These signs of stress are normal and may be more likely in people with loved ones in part of the world most affected by the outbreak. During an infectious disease outbreak, care for your own physical and mental health, as well as reaching out in kindness to those affected by the situation.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP COPE WITH EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

1. Manage Your Stress

- ◆ Stay informed. Refer to credible sources for updates on the local situation.
- ◆ Stay focused on your personal strengths.
- ◆ Make time to relax and rest.
- ◆ Safely maintain a routine and your physical activity levels.

2. Be Informed and Inform Your Family

- ◆ Follow Public Health guidelines for protection and care.
- ◆ Avoid sharing unconfirmed news about the infectious disease to avoid creating unnecessary fear and panic.
- ◆ Give honest age-appropriate information to children and remember to stay calm; children often feel what you feel.

3. Connect with Your Community

- ◆ Keep contact, while following social distance guidelines, with family and friends.
- ◆ Network with your faith group.
- ◆ Accept help from family, friends, colleagues and religious ministers.

4. Reach Out and Help

- ◆ If you know someone affected by the outbreak, call them to see how they are doing, and remember to keep their confidentiality.
- ◆ Consider acts of kindness for those who have been asked to practice social distancing, such as having a meal delivered or offering to drop off homework at their doorstep.
- ◆ Locate and volunteer at a charity or organization near you.
- ◆ Encourage friends and family to get safely involved with you.

5. Be Sensitive

- ◆ Avoid blaming anyone or assuming someone has the disease because of the way they look or where they or their families are from.
- ◆ An infectious disease is not connected to any ethnic group; speak up with tactfulness when you hear false rumors or negative stereotypes that foster racism and xenophobia.

Consider seeking professional help if you or a loved one is having difficulty coping.

Take Practical Steps:

- ◆ Stay informed from credible sources.
- ◆ Maintain good anxiety management practices, such as quiet time and journaling.
- ◆ Stay connected with loved ones while practicing safe distances.
- ◆ Help those in need, in a safe way, whenever possible.
- ◆ Be prepared, but don't fixate on over preparedness.
- ◆ Keep a positive outlook.



Resources

**Imperial County
Behavioral Health Services**
442-265-1525 or 1-800-817-5292

Imperial County Public Health
<http://www.icphd.org/>

**Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention (CDC)**
<https://www.cdc.gov/>

World Health Organization (WHO)
<https://www.who.int/>

