

The Psychology of Pandemic COVID-19: Importance of Psychological wellbeing

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Abstract: I Think it is difficult to maintain a healthy lifestyle when people are in the middle of a crisis like this. The uncertainty, and worries related to finances, childcare, elderly parents, and job security disrupt everyone's routines, lifestyles and mental health. The uncertainty about the future, the ceaseless news coverage and constant social media driven flood of messages can increase our sense of anxiety and stress. Stress is a normal response to these types of situations. Stress disturbs our sleeping and eating patterns, leads to irritability or emotional outbursts, low motivation, and changes in use of alcohol or other drugs. The article is based on literature from respective journals, newspapers, news channels, social media websites and WHO news covering wide range of collection of related information on covid 19 and importance of Psychological wellbeing. Lastly it summarizes the reasons for upsetting and tips for Psychological wellbeing.

Key words: Covid 19. Psychological wellbeing.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

One of the key lessons learnt from the SARS and MERS epidemics was the need for early sensitisation of public health experts to the psychological effects of a pandemic and to cater to the mental health needs of those quarantined. The World Health Organisation's mental health and substance abuse department has emphasised the importance of a mental health response to the growing COVID-19 situation. Chinese researchers have recently explored the effects of online counselling sessions for healthcare staff as well as those in isolation during the initial COVID-19 outbreak in China. Even though anger and resentment towards the government was the initial response, most of them reported better work environment and emotional satisfaction with basic psychological support despite the worsening situation in China

Pandemics are far from being just medical phenomena. They disrupt personal and professional lives severely and affect people and societies on several levels. The key strategies promoted for containment of an outbreak of this nature are isolation and physical distancing – both can have significant impacts on our life and relationships.

II. METHODOLOGY:

There is lot of growing public fear and panic regarding the outbreak of covid 19. It primarily results in discrimination against families and acquaintances of quarantined and isolated people which would eventually risks everyone. To combat these, spreading awareness, fact-checking, making services transparent and improvement of Psychological wellbeing are essential.

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Objectives:

1. To study the present scenario of the covid 19
2. To understand the need for improvements in the quality of Psychological wellbeing.
3. To suggest some tips to maintain Psychological wellbeing.

The team of trained professional Psychological, social workers and counsellors handle queries regarding appropriate precautions, home quarantine and travel among others. Meanwhile they often encounter confused, upset, frightened and in some cases annoyed people. Empathising with the predicament they address the concern and convey the need to be alert but not panic. For providing counselling services the calls are

rerouted to the concerned expert team. The timely guidance, support and sensitivity lessen fear, confusion, mental distress, social stigmatisation and discrimination.

According to the objectives of the study the design of the research is descriptive in nature. Safety of people is very important now. Because Like any other fast spreading infection, COVID-19 comes with an exponentially increasing barrage of misinformation constantly thrown at us via social media, fuelling stress and mass hysteria. In addition, the 'fear of transmission' begets stigma, marginalisation and xenophobia, kicking in the 'fear of fellow humans'.

The health machinery of some countries such as Italy is creaking Healthcare workers are burnt out and at maximum risk of infection), and medical supplies are depleted. In spite of well-formed protocols, hospitals are flooded with requests for testing and treatment while people fiercely compete for basic health amenities. Faulty treatments claiming cure and prevention are booming, leading to adverse health consequences. Health anxiety, sleep disturbances, panic attacks, depression and loneliness are the other known mental health fallouts of living through a pandemic. All these affect the entire life question for many.

But sadly the focus of assessing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is almost entirely biased towards 'deaths', while mental well-being, one of the most common indicators of public health, unfortunately takes a backseat.

Reasons lack of mental health and Psychological wellbeing Because of COVID-19 :

Pandemic covid 19 is impacting people's mental health and Psychological wellbeing of everyone:

1. The fear of reliving a pandemic have lived through another infectious disease pandemic/epidemic in lifetime (such as Nipah, Ebola or SARS).
2. Fear of losing livelihood due to isolation or marked limitation of travel and social behaviour (applies to those in small scale industries in the travel, fitness, food or tourism sectors).
3. A constant sense of insecurity for oneself and loved ones.
4. Anxiety of social/physical distancing resulting in lack of contact with family or friends who may be living far away. For some it's the other way round: getting huddled for the first time with a large family resulting in mixed emotions.
5. The phobia of going out of home.
6. Stigma towards people with symptoms such as cold, cough or sneezing, which might just be a simple flu.
7. The compulsive need to hoard food, essentials or medical supplies such as antibiotics, analgesics, anti-allergic medicines, face masks, sanitisers.
8. Psychological stress over the growing panic, which compounds daily, many times due to reinforced messaging in all forms of media.
9. In healthcare workers, paramedics, volunteers, virologists or media persons at the frontline of the COVID-19 control or coverage: fatigue, burnout, frustration or the fear of contracting or guilt of transmitting infection.

Health and Well-being during COVID-19

It is difficult to take care of a healthy lifestyle when people are within the middle of a crisis like this. The uncertainty, and worries associated with finances, childcare, elderly parents, and job security disrupt everyone's routines, lifestyles and psychological state. The uncertainty about the longer term, the ceaseless news coverage and constant social media driven flood of messages can increase our sense of hysteria and stress. Stress may be a normal response to those sorts of situations. Stress disturbs our sleeping and eating patterns, results in irritability or emotional outbursts, low motivation, and changes in use of alcohol or other drugs.

Tips for Psychological Well-being

Limit News Consumption to Trusted Sources:

It is important to get accurate and timely public health information regarding COVID-19 from such trusted sources because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO) and therefore the official advisory by the respective Ministries of Health. But an excessive amount of exposure to media coverage of the virus can cause increased feelings of fear and anxiety. Most coverage, especially on latest scientific developments isn't relevant to your day to day practice. Balance the time spent on news and social media with other activities like reading, taking note of music, lecture others or another activity.

Correct Use of Social Media:

Most individuals are anxious to share information on social media, but false and misleading information may have serious consequences for our lives. consider before posting or sharing on social

media. Ask yourself if the content is truthful, helpful, inspiring, necessary or kind? For more recommendations on mindful use of social media during COVID-19.

Be Generous:

It is tempting under the present conditions to think only of ourselves and our family. We worry about shortages and hoard essential items like food and medicines which can find yourself causing shortages. While it's important to refill on food and other essentials, please consider others too who may have these things. Generosity can help us develop a way of community and make sure that everyone has equal access to resources.

Don't Stigmatize and Practice Empathy:

Viruses don't discriminate and neither should we! The panic and chaos caused by the spread of COVID-19 can cause stigma against people, places and communities. Stigma can have negative consequences on the psychological state of the affected individuals, generate an environment of mistrust and also discourage stigmatized individuals from reporting or testing for the disease. We should always combat stigma by understanding that the virus doesn't acknowledge class, race, ethnicity or nationality. We should always attempt to put ourselves in their shoes and show kindness towards people and communities and stop information which will promote discrimination and bigotry.

Mindfulness:

Mindfulness is that the practice of being conscious of all that's happening in our mind and around us without explicitly reacting to anything. We live each moment as full and rich. To practice mindfulness, bring all of your attention to the "now" and "present". Remember every passing thought or feeling without judgement. Evidence shows that practicing mindfulness in our day to day lives can significantly increase our capacity to deal with traumatic events, improve control over our emotional states and reduce anxiety and stress related symptoms.

Breathing Exercises:

Whenever in stress, take an extended and deep breath! "Mindful Breathing" are often learnt by being aware of each passing breath and easily observing the physical sensation involved within the process of breathing. Breathing may help us regulate emotions and manage stress. A crucial pathway for mindful breathing is "decentering" learning where we learn to look at negative thoughts in our mind without judging thus de-linking self with depressive emotions.

Meditation:

Meditation is straightforward, free, and only takes a couple of minutes! It can promote relaxation, decrease negative emotions, build skills to manage stress, and increase tolerance. Mindful meditation involves being conscious of your body, breath, and thoughts, but letting go of any negative thoughts and emotions without judging yourself for having them. There are a variety of resources online and offline which will guide you on meditation.

Finally Keep updated:

With the volatility of the situation and the torrent of information flooding in from multiple sources, it can be difficult to sift between what's reliable and what isn't. These are some reliable channels you can turn to for correct information and updates. It's also important to seek out your local source of information depending on geographic location.

- The World Health Organization (WHO) Coronavirus disease (COVID-2019) situation reports (updated daily): <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>
- The WHO also has an interactive Whatsapp bot: +41 79 893 18 92 (Type "hi" and send to get started)
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Coronavirus (COVID-19) website: Latest updates, information for healthcare professionals and resources for the community: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Medshropen: Coronavirus COVID-19 Daily Update at 12pm GMT: aims to provide clinicians and the public with an overview of the latest data, guidelines, key publications and policy around COVID-19: <https://en.medshr.net/covid>

III. CONCLUSION:

All of this is often exactly a War. War against a standard enemy. And when we're getting to war, you don't make light of the prep. Which brings to mind this brilliantly appropriate quote by Michael O. Leavitt, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007:

“Everything we do before a pandemic will seem alarmist. Everything we do after a pandemic will seem inadequate. This is the dilemma we face, but it should not stop us from doing what we can to prepare. We need to reach out to everyone with words that inform, but not inflame. We need to encourage everyone to prepare, but not panic.”. In this global healthcare crisis and the ultimate test of our times, it is on all of us to be responsible.

Government is seriously making an attempt to safeguard the mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 outbreak. But Healthcare workers’ constant exposure to the outbreak and its possible impact on their mental health needs to be considered in future interventions.

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