



Alexis Rojas, MS/MSW, PhD Candidate
A Rojas LLC

*Navigating
Behavioral Health
Resources:
an Integrated
Approach to Accessing
Services Following
COVID-19*

Overview

This session will provide an overview of some of the **common thoughts and feelings that may present during or following a pandemic** (e.g., anxiety, worry, and fear), **behavioral health resources** to support students and teachers, and the **tools to navigate and access high-quality services**.



Possible Thoughts &
Feelings During and
Following a
Pandemic



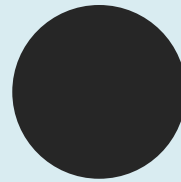
Behavioral Health
Resources



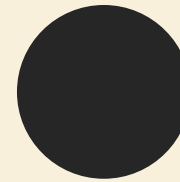
Tools to Navigation
Resources

Thoughts & Feelings

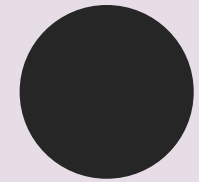
Some possible feelings that may present during and following a pandemic



Anxiety



Worry



Fear

Tips For Social Distancing, Quarantine, And Isolation During An Infectious Disease Outbreak

What Is Social Distancing?

Social distancing is a way to keep people from interacting closely or frequently enough to spread an infectious disease. Schools and other gathering places such as movie theaters may close, and sports events and religious services may be cancelled.

What Is Quarantine?

Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. It lasts long enough to ensure the person has not contracted an infectious disease.

What Is Isolation?

Isolation prevents the spread of an infectious disease by separating people who are sick from those who are not. It lasts as long as the disease is contagious.

Introduction

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, local officials may require the public to take measures to limit and control the spread of the disease. This tip sheet provides information about **social distancing**, **quarantine**, and **isolation**. The government has the right to enforce federal and state laws related to public health if people within the country get sick with highly contagious diseases that have the potential to develop into outbreaks or pandemics.

This tip sheet describes feelings and thoughts you may have during and after social distancing, quarantine, and isolation. It also suggests ways to care for your behavioral health during these experiences and provides resources for more help.

What To Expect: Typical Reactions

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations such as an infectious disease outbreak that requires social distancing, quarantine, or isolation. People may feel:

Anxiety, worry, or fear related to:

- Your own health status
- The health status of others whom you may have exposed to the disease
- The resentment that your friends and family may feel if they need to go into quarantine as a result of contact with you
- The experience of monitoring yourself, or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of the disease
- Time taken off from work and the potential loss of income and job security
- The challenges of securing things you need, such as groceries and personal care items
- **Concern** about being able to effectively care for children or others in your care
- **Uncertainty or frustration** about how long you will need to remain in this situation, and uncertainty about the future
- **Loneliness** associated with feeling cut off from the world and from loved ones
- **Anger** if you think you were exposed to the disease because of others' negligence
- **Boredom and frustration** because you may not be able to work or engage in regular day-to-day activities
- **Uncertainty or ambivalence** about the situation
- **A desire** to use alcohol or drugs to cope
- **Symptoms of depression**, such as feelings of hopelessness, changes in appetite, or sleeping too little or too much

Behavioral Health Resources

Resources and strategies that may
be helpful to support students and
staff

Gratitude

Reflection

Self-care

Reliable Data
Sources

Empathy

Breaks

Coming Out of Quarantine

Feelings vary from person to person, but you may experience some of the following reactions from students and colleagues:


- Concerns about health and safety, including fear and worry.
- Stress from the experiences surrounding COVID-19 (including health monitoring, distancing, etc.).
- Sadness, anger, or frustration with family and friends.
- Levels of guilt or shame.
- Changes or increases in intensity around previous mental or behavioral health concerns.
- Exhaustion or fatigue
- Confusion or resentment

This information and supplemental resources can be found at [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) website.



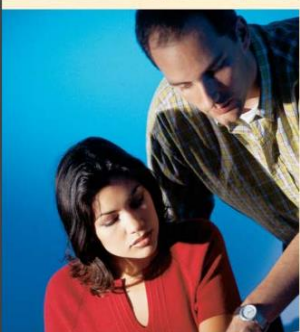
Promoting a Positive Workplace Environment

A proactive stress management plan focuses both on the environment and the individual. A clear organizational structure with defined roles and responsibilities for linestaff responders, leads, supervisors, and managers reduces the potential for staff stress. An effective manager is familiar with the many facets of worker stress and takes a wide range of steps to integrate stress management strategies in the workplace.




As a supervisor or manager you must assume shared responsibility for promoting a positive and healthy work environment, and not rely exclusively on workers initiating their own self-care practices. You should address the following dimensions when designing a stress management plan that prioritizes environmental and organizational health:

- Effective management structure and leadership
- Clear purpose, goals, and training
- Functionally defined roles
- Administrative controls
- Team support
- Plan for stress management.



Managers today face the challenges of supplying energy and passion, promoting a positive attitude, and creating an environment in which people feel connected to their work and their colleagues. Managers can boost employees' perception of strong management support through feedback, open communication, and high visibility—that is, through a dynamic and supportive leadership style, one that engages others so as to raise each other to high levels of motivation.



The following are principles of leadership that you can apply in the ordinary course of your daily life: meet challenges head on; be curious and daring; create a culture where failure and error are looked upon as steps toward success; and demonstrate personal courage to galvanize a team or organization that lacks resolve. The most inspiring opportunities for courage come when you face the longest odds.

Minimizing Stress in the Workplace

- Set the tone by treating coworkers with respect and valuing their contributions.
- Hold regular staff meetings to plan, problem solve, recognize accomplishments, and promote staff cohesiveness.
- Clearly communicate the rationale behind procedural or supervisory changes and performance expectations.
- Create a formal employee suggestion system and encourage staff to contribute.
- Resolve conflicts early and quickly.
- Prepare workers for concrete tasks that they may perform through technical training.
- Acknowledge that work is often stressful and connect staff to professional help if necessary.
- Promote an atmosphere where attention to one's emotional state is acceptable and encouraged rather than stigmatized or disregarded.



During the Crisis—At the Scene

At the disaster scene, you, as a manager, can provide certain supports for workers to mitigate stress and help them effectively perform the tasks at hand.

Minimizing Stress During the Crisis—At the Scene

- Clearly define individual roles and reevaluate them if the situation changes.
- Institute briefings at each shift change that cover the current status of the work environment, safety procedures, and required safety equipment.
- Partner inexperienced workers with experienced veterans. The buddy system is an effective method to provide support, monitor stress, and reinforce safety procedures. Require outreach personnel to enter the community in pairs.
- Rotate workers from high-stress to lower-stress functions.
- Initiate, encourage, and monitor work breaks, especially when casualties are involved. During lengthy events, implement longer breaks and days off, and curtail weekend work whenever possible.

- Establish respite areas that visually separate workers from the scene and the public. At longer operations, establish an area where responders can shower, eat, change clothes, and sleep.
- Implement flexible schedules for workers who are directly affected by an event. This can help workers balance home and job responsibilities.
- Reduce noise as much as possible by providing earplugs, noise mufflers, or telephone headsets.
- Mitigate the effects of extreme temperatures through the use of protective clothing, proper hydration, and frequent breaks.
- Ensure that lighting is sufficient, adjustable, and in good working order.
- Lessen the effect of odors and tastes, and protect workers' breathing by supplying facemasks and respirators.
- Provide security for staff at facilities or sites in dangerous areas, including escorts for workers going to and from their vehicles.
- Provide mobile phones for workers in dangerous environments. Ensure that staff know who to call when problems arise.



After the Crisis

The ending of the disaster assignment, whether it involved immediate response or long-term recovery work, can be a period of mixed emotions for workers. Though there may be some relief that the disaster operation is ending, there is often a sense of loss and “letdown,” with some difficulty making the transition back into family life and the regular job. The following are action steps that can help ease the disengagement and transition process for workers.

Minimizing Stress for Workers—After the Crisis

- Allow time off for workers who have experienced personal trauma or loss. Transition these individuals back into the organization by initially assigning them to less-demanding jobs.
- Develop protocols to provide workers with stigma-free counseling so that workers can address the emotional aspects of their experience.
- Institute exit interviews and/or seminars to help workers put their experiences in perspective and to validate what they have seen, done, thought, and felt.
- Provide educational inservices or workshops around stress management and self-care.
- Offer group self-care activities and acknowledgments.

This information has been excerpted from SAMHSA's "A Guide to Managing Stress in Crisis Response Professions." DHHS Publication No. SMA 4113 Printed 2005

Managing Stress During A Crisis: A Guide for Supervisors

Helpful Strategies in the Classroom & Beyond

- Encourage and praise students for positive experiences during isolation (e.g., vulnerability and bravery)
- Recognize the varying access to technology and resources during isolation and how that may impact the learner, preparing for greater opportunities for differential learning in the classroom
- Clear communication (jargon free), reintegrate structure into student's lives, and create well-defined expectations
- Harness the change (use resources from trusted sources to continue some of the new platforms for learning)
 - *continue utilizing some distant learning engagement activities*
- Acknowledge and accept, demonstrate empathy, and build a space for open dialogue



Important Reminder

Average of 129 suicides per day

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US

1.4 million people attempted suicide in 2017

48,344 Americans died by suicide in 2018

Know the warning signs, report threats right away, communicate

[Resources and warning signs](#)

Tools to Navigating Resources

Accessing behavioral health care
through an integrated approach

Reduce barriers,
awareness

Think outside of the
box

Know when to ask for
help

Physician integration

Local resources

Building relationships

Barriers to Care

- High Cost and Insufficient Insurance Coverage
- Limited Options and Long Waits
- Lack of Awareness
- Social Stigma
- Income
- Geography

[Infographic and additional resources.](#)

Unmanaged Symptoms May Lead to Poor Outcomes

High, pervasive anxiety, restricts access to the frontal lobe, for example.

- Decreasing reason and process
- Decreasing the ability to contribute to the learning environment
- Decreasing overall outcomes (academic, personal, and professional)

Engaging access to care and practicing techniques such as those listed below may be impactful in overall quality of life.

- Mindfulness
- Self-care
 - Failure to engage by both students and teachers can result in physical and mental distress
- Time Management

This information and other resources focused on Character Strengths for educators can be found [here](#).

THINGS TO REMEMBER

You are
important and
you matter.

You
are
so
loved.

Your
mistakes
don't define
you.

It's okay
to ask
for help.

You are
allowed to
say no.

Your wants
and needs
are valid.

Productivity
doesn't define
your worth.

Your boundaries
are important &
worth respect.

Blessing Manifesting

[The Risk You Must Take | Dr. Kristen Lee | TEDxOcala](#)

“Don’t let mindfulness become the new kale.”

Questions

Contact

Alexis

Rojas

arojasllc@outlook.com
