Coping with stress, anxiety during COVID-19 second wave

NewsDay (Zimbabwe) · 12 Jan 2021 · 9

These are difficult times for us as we are in a lockdown and hear about the spread of the second wave of COVID-19 all over the world. As we watch the events around the outbreak of coronavirus unfold, it is not unnatural to feel increasing stress and panic. The news keeps recurring in our minds and it becomes overwhelming and scary. As the days go by, we hear the number of cases and deaths are increasing faster, the stress can pile up and affect us both physically and mentally.

It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused or scared during a crisis especially during times like these where the COVID-19 outbreak has everyone on edge and extreme measures are being enforced across the globe. Being in a pandemic requires extra mental energy. Stress is a fact of life wherever you are and whatever you are doing. You cannot avoid stress, but you can learn to manage it so that it doesn't overrun you. Below are some of the ways in which you can cope with stress and anxiety during the second wave of COVID-19.

Set limits on news about COVID-19 Stress is a common experience in modern life. It is our emotional response to demands that are made on us by others, outside events, or even ourselves. In these trying times, one must learn to manage stress and positively cope with stressful situations.

Read news from trustworthy sources and avoid media outlets that dwell on things that are scary and too exaggerated. Instead, turn to sources that give reliable information about how to protect yourself. Excessively checking updates of coronavirus news can leave you stressed and emotionally exhausted.

Try to make a conscious effort to disconnect and adopt healthy news habits, turn off pushy notifications from news apps and seek factual information from trusted sources. You are also supposed to set limits on your media consumption. Tuning into media reports that talk about how fast the pandemic is spreading, or how many people are dying, will increase your anxiety. Limit your media consumption to a certain time frame or a certain number of articles.

Practise good self-care

While the situation is frustrating, there are things you can do to make your time at home enjoyable and take care of your mental health as well as cope with stress-related disorders. Eating a balanced diet, getting plenty of sleep, and engaging in leisure activities will help you stay physically and psychologically fit during stressful times. Good self-care keeps your immune system robust.

Stay active and exercise

Staying active not only ensures you keep your body moving, but exercise also helps to reduce stress, boost your energy levels and keep you more alert. Being physically active helps lower blood pressure and cholesterol and can significantly reduce the risk of heart diseases, stroke and diabetes. Through out this time of uncertainty, we can take control of our health and well-being. So, whatever your situation and wherever you are, try to keep active, eat healthy and exercise, above all don't for get to exercise your soul though having constant communion with your Creator.

Reaching out to others

Without social interactions made possible by going to the office, working from home can make one feel lonely. Making time to reach out and connect with others is important for our mental health. Socialising decreases stress and anxiety and supports calm and happy feelings. By talking to someone, we share our emotions and experiences, provide or receive support which makes us feel connected. When we socialise and have physical proximity to others, we reduce cortisol levels. Simply sharing our concerns with a loved one can help us feel better. Talking to a friend or family member can help to keep your stress levels unguestder control.

Stay connected

Self-isolation can get you pretty lonely, especially if you are a sociable individual. Thankfully, technology can facilitate online chats and video calls. Communication is important for one to know what is going on with one's colleagues, and also for your own mental health. According to studies, loneliness can be damaging to our health just like smoking 15 cigarettes a day, so do not isolate yourself completely.

Stay productive and well informed about what is happening.

No matter your situation, you surely have obligations during the day and things to get done around the house or work if you are working from home. If you have shifted to working remotely, settle into your new "office" after you complete your morning self-care and go about your responsibilities as you normally would, making sure to pause for lunch, breaks and walks throughout the day. Being in lockdown doesn't have to be boring, not if you keep yourself occupied. Another thing you need to do is to ensure you are up to date with everything that is going on, and that you keep yourself abreast with the latest changes. Naturally, these days situations are chang ing on a day-to-day basis, so you need to try and keep on top of the situation. You need to keep feeding your mind with correct information and ensure you are not part of those who spread lies on social media platforms.

Work-life balance is key

With the second wave of infections on our doorstep, it looks like we will continue teleworking for the foreseeable future. Some people find working from home beneficial to their well being. But for others, working from home has its own challenges.
Longer working hours, isolation being separated from colleagues, virtual communication issues and technological challenges can make one feel increasingly stressed. You have to maintain your sleeping habits. It is easy to miss out on sleep when worry and stress are at high levels, which means your physical health and mental well being will suffer. Anxiety and worry often affect sleeping patterns.

Seek professional support

If you are feeling overwhelmed and in need of professional help, there are many options available. You can seek help from a professional counsellor or peer support. Peer support means persons with lived experience of mental ill health should provide support to each other. You can also keep in touch with your family, friends and colleagues. Ask how they are and let them know how you are. While it is a very difficult time for all, it is important for people to be mentally ready in order to get through this period and to reduce anxiety and stress; especially when so many of us are in a lockdown situation.