

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

State of Mississippi

1101 Robert E. Lee Building
239 North Lamar Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39201



(601) 359-1288
FAX (601) 359-6295
TDD (601) 359-6230

Diana S. Mikula - Executive Director

For More Information Contact: Adam Moore
Director of Communications
Mississippi Department of Mental Health
Phone: (601) 359-1288

DMH Shares Wellness Tips During Coronavirus Emergency

March 23, 2020 (Jackson, MS) – The ongoing outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus is a challenging time for many, but the Mississippi Department of Mental Health is encouraging Mississippians to learn about how they can cope with the stress and anxiety that is a natural response to these difficulties.

Fear, stress, and anxiety may be overwhelming, but coping skills can help make people and communities stronger. While many businesses and offices are practicing social distancing, the DMH Helpline will remain staffed at all times and is available by calling 1-877-210-8513 for information about services and supports.

“This will be a challenging time, but we will continue our work to support a better tomorrow for all Mississippians,” DMH Executive Director Diana Mikula said. “While we know there is a lot of uncertainty at the moment, we also know that we can take steps to stay healthy, cope with our stress, and educate our friends and families to do the same.”

Everyone reacts differently in a time of crisis, but there are also some things everyone should try to keep in mind.

Stress and Coping

Older people or those with chronic diseases may react more strongly to a crisis. That reaction may include excessive fear or worry about their health, trouble sleeping, or increased use of alcohol.

To support yourself, make sure not to watch too much news or social media. It can be distressing to hear so much bad news, so take breaks from it. Make sure you are also taking time to do things you enjoy, whether that’s playing games, reading books, or enjoying a nice cup of coffee.

People who have pre-existing mental health conditions should make sure to continue their treatment, whether that is medication or therapy, and also pay attention to worsening symptoms and share them with their service providers.

As always, take care of your physical health by getting exercise, eating healthy meals, avoiding excessive drinking, and trying to get plenty of sleep. Everyone should seek help when it is needed.

Helping Others Cope

Adults often influence the way young people react, and parents and caregivers who react calmly can help reassure and support children and others who are near them.

However, parents and adults can watch for some common signs that young people around them are having difficulty coping. Watch for extreme crying or irritation in young children, or excessive irritability or acting out in teenagers. Children and young people may return to behavior they previously outgrew, or they may begin avoiding activities they usually enjoy.

Help children and teens cope with stress by keeping up regular routines when possible or by creating a schedule for learning and school-based activities that are taking place in the home. Also talk to them and share information in a way they can process, while also ensuring they are not over-exposed to news and social media coverage. Above all, be reassuring and act as a role model in living out a healthy lifestyle.

Social Distancing and Isolation

While many businesses and people are practicing social distancing, remember that does not mean one has to stay isolated at the same time. Taking proactive steps to reach out to friends and family members can help reduce the anxiety or loneliness someone may feel during this time.

People are encouraged to get “face-to-face” contact through video chat applications like FaceTime or Skype. If someone isn’t able to do a video chat, then call them and hear their voice and let them hear yours. Practicing deep breathing, meditation, yoga, and getting exercise can help maintain a positive mindset.

Help is Available

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration also has a Disaster Distress Hotline at 1-800-985-5990, and you may also text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

The DMH Helpline will remain staffed at all times. Call 1-877-210-8513 for information about services or supports near you. Additional resources for Mississippians are located www.mentalhealthms.com and www.standupms.org.

###

DMH is supporting a better tomorrow by making a difference in the lives of Mississippians with mental illness, substance use disorders and intellectual or developmental disabilities one person at a time