



**nami**

National Alliance on Mental Illness

**MINNESOTA**

# **Minding Your Mental Health During COVID-19**

# Learning Objectives

Learn these four things you can do to mind your mental health

- Recognize the impact of COVID-19 on everyone's mental health
- Understand the impact of COVID-19 on diverse communities
- Learn the steps that can be taken to promote good mental health
- Know the warning signs of poor mental health and suicide and what to do

# Write it Down

- *Take out a piece of paper and pen*
- *Write down what you have been struggling with  
– sleep, anxiety, lethargy, etc.*
- *As we move through the presentation, write down anything that strikes you as something you would do that could help.*

# What We Are Experiencing

- Living with uncertainty
- Worrying about catching it or loved ones becoming sick, especially if you are an essential worker
- Being alone and isolated
- Being together too much with family
- Loss of jobs and income, worrying about bills
- Grief due to cancellation of meaningful events such as graduations, weddings, funerals, concerts, sports tournaments, birthdays

# What We Are Experiencing

- Trying to teach children and work at the same time, especially hard if the child is on an IEP
- Trying to support a loved one who is elderly, vulnerable, has a disability, has a mental illness
- Missing touch - physical distancing is hard
- Difficulty working from home, not a good set up ergonomically, zoom fatigue
- Feeling helpless, especially hard for people who have experienced trauma

Pandemic has revealed how **underlying racial disparities in access to health care, housing and economic opportunity** determines one's life chances

# Unequal Impact of COVID-19

- Exposed inequities in our community
- Disproportionally impacting diverse communities due to:
  - More likely to have underlying health conditions such as asthma, COPD, diabetes ( due to weathering, polluted areas)
  - More likely to live in densely populated areas (due to redlining, etc.) and in a food desert
  - Less likely to have health insurance and a primary care clinic
  - Less likely to have sick leave
  - More likely to live in a multi-generational household
  - More likely to work in essential jobs, such as service industry, nursing homes, hospitals, transit workers, healthcare, grocery and warehouse workers, first responders, childcare, in-home attendants, postal employees and cleaning service workers

# Disproportional Impact

- The new analysis shows that Black Minnesotans have the highest age-adjusted death rate among all racial and ethnic groups at 70 per 100,000 residents. The age-adjusted rate for whites is about 20 deaths per 100,000 people.
- In Louisiana, people who are Black, make up 32% of the state population, but accounted for over 70% of COVID-19 deaths
- In Illinois people of color accounted for 56% of deaths while only making up 39% of the state population.

# Racism and COVID-19

- Impact on Asian Americans is more related to discrimination:
  - Blaming Asian Americans for COVID
  - Calling it the China Virus, Wuhan Virus, Yellow Virus or a Foreign Virus
  - Exposes xenophobia – we know viruses do not have nationalities or ethnic appearances
  - Targeting of Asian Americans for the virus, including physical and verbal attacks and microaggressions.
  - Causing great stress, hypervigilance, quickened heart-beat, depression, anxiety

People were struggling with their mental health before Mr. Floyd's murder...



Now it's worse.

# This Has All Led To:

- Heightened anxiety and depression
- Increased use of alcohol
- COVID-19 fatigue
- Increasingly high stress levels

# Impact of Stress

- Mental Health
  - depression, anxiety, mood, irritability
- Physical Health
  - headaches, stomach aches, sleeplessness, anger, low energy
  - Can lead to diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure

# Steps You Can Take To Better Health



# Work Life Harmony

- Make a decision as to when you're "on" and when you're "off"
- Manage expectations. How are you measuring up to your own and others' expectations? Are they realistic? Are you promising more than you can do?
- When do you work best – morning, afternoon? How can you structure your day to reflect this?
- What do you do well and how can you build on that?

# Healthy Coping Strategies

- 10-minute meditations (Calm, Headspace)
- Yoga
- Listen to music
- Power naps
- Doing a puzzle, crossword puzzle, sudoku

# Breathing Exercise

- 4,7,8 Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of 4. Hold your breath for a count of 7. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of 8.
- Inhale for 4 exhale for 6

Slow, exhale more than inhale, focus on how you are breathing

# Move

30-60 minutes a day

- Dance
- Walk
- Run
- Bike
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Jazzercise



# Nutrition

- Limit comfort food
- Have healthy snacks easily available
- Drink more water
- Eat more veggies and fruits
- Avoid too much alcohol
- Be attuned to emotional eating



# Sleep

*Sleep optimizes physical, mental and emotional functioning – including cognitive functioning*

- Go to bed at the same time
- Keep a routine for how you go to bed
- Check on the conditions that help you sleep better (temperature, lighting, no technology, etc.)
- Use an eye mask

# Control What You Can

- Take charge of how you spend your time
- Limit exposure to the news
- Take the steps to keep your self safe
  - stay home
  - wash your hands
  - wear a mask
  - clean frequently used surfaces.

# Create a Routine

- Create some sort of normalcy
- Wake up and go to bed around the same time
- Schedule meals and exercise

7 AM	Wake Up, Breakfast
8 AM	Shower & dress
9 AM	Start work
1030 AM	Walk around the block
1045 AM	Check-in

# Journaling

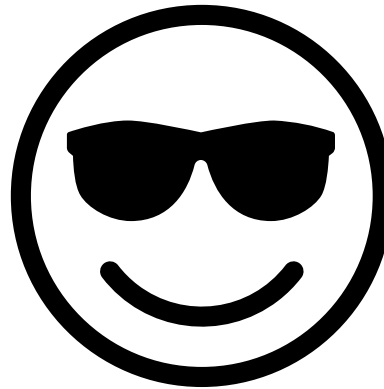
- Write down your fears
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Connect to your sense of purpose

*When I wake up in the middle of the night worried about something or thinking about what I need to do the next day, I get up and write it down. Then my mind is clear and I can go back to sleep.*



# Positivity

Focus on positive things. Name three things you are grateful for before you even get out bed in the morning. Watch an uplifting or funny movie, read a good book, do something that makes you laugh or smile. Do something that gives you joy.



# Volunteer/Give Back

We feel better when we help others. Make masks, help with a food drive, write a kind note to someone, donate blood.

*When you carry out acts of kindness you get a wonderful feeling inside. It is as though something inside your body responds and says, yes, this is how I ought to feel.* Harold Kushner

# Today

Focus on today and not the future. There are too many unknowns and it can be frightening and increase our anxiety.

There are three days – yesterday, today and tomorrow.



# Time Management

Do goal setting  
instead of seat time,  
use realistic thinking,  
prioritize what needs  
to be done first,  
make a list and circle  
the top 3-5 things for  
home and work



# Technology Boundaries

- Don't look at your phone/laptop during meals or while watching TV
- Don't bring them into the bedroom or near the bed
- Block off time to do emails and stop after a certain time

# Find Your Quiet Place

Set aside a space to relax, use aromatherapy, take time to be grateful, share and celebrate good things that happen. Being in nature can help.

*I locked myself in the bathroom for ten minutes. I told the kids they couldn't disturb me. I lit a nice candle, took deep breaths, read a page or two of my book.*

# Faith, Spirituality and Culture

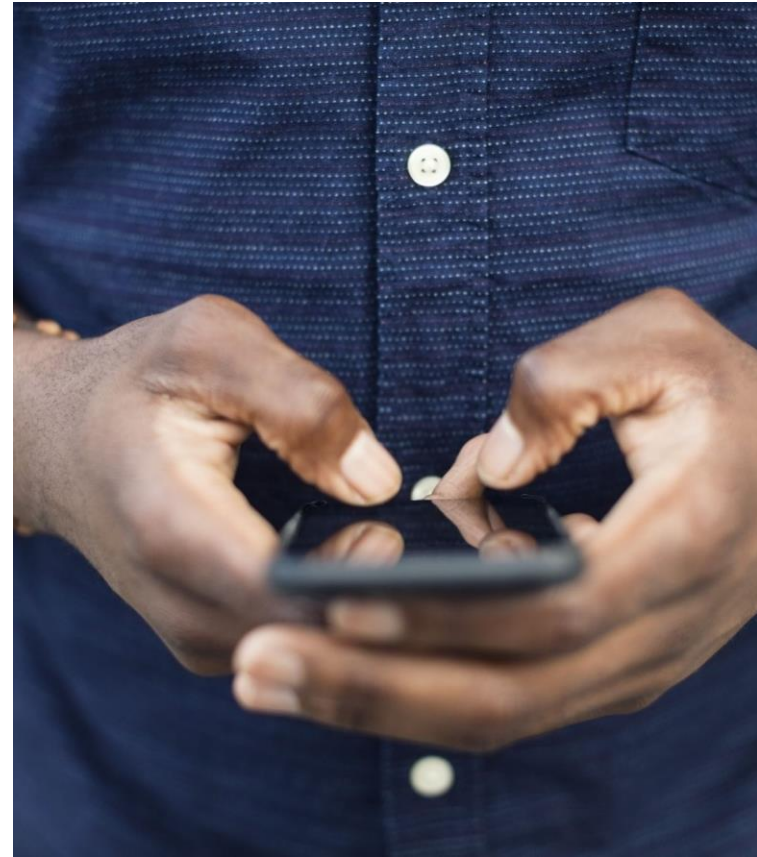
Staying connected to your faith community, spirituality and culture:

- Gives you a sense of purpose so you focus on what is important
- Makes you feel more connected to things outside of yourself
- Connects you to a “higher power” which can make you not feel so responsible for all things in your life
- Connects you to a community of people
- Connects you to your culture and healing practices creates a sense of belonging and strengthens your sense of self

## Stay connected to others

Connect with friends and family, don't isolate, reach in and reach out, call, use facetime, text, be creative and play games together or have a "happy hour" or a meal together, connect to faith community

*We facetimed with our grandchildren and played cards with them. We felt better since we didn't have to "talk" about COVID but could "do" something with them*



# Grieve

It's ok to grieve about the things we have lost – events where we connected or celebrated with others and we have lost these important life events.

Sports/Games

Birthday parties

Recitals/Concerts

Weddings

Funerals

Graduations

## Ban Perfectionism

No you won't be a horrible parent because you didn't teach your children French at home or you didn't clean that closet or do that remodeling project. Give yourself a break.

*No one was taking my old clothes. Another reason not to clean out my closet...*

*By the end of the second week of "home schooling" I was exhausted. So much for visiting all the online museums...*

***Strive for  
Progress not  
Perfectionism***

# Addressing Guilt

- **Guilt** – a normal reaction over something we did or failed to do
- **Guilt** –believing we aren't a good person, are a failure or that we let other people down, we yelled at kids, aren't productive at work
- **Guilt** –Survivor's guilt during the COVID-19 pandemic - didn't lose job, aren't visiting elderly parents, aren't on the front lines, have a home, not helping others, etc.

# Addressing Guilt

- Acknowledge these feelings of guilt
- Try not to dwell on them
- Apologize when appropriate
- Give yourself a break – we are in unprecedented times
- Change how you talk to yourself

# Marathon

- Initially, we thought it was a short timeline, a temporary situation
- Now, it's longer

**Change your frame of mind**



# Compassion



We don't act our best in a crisis


Think the best of people

Give people grace and space.


# What do I do for self-care?


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 Get plenty of sleep


 Enjoy sunshine

 Cook

 Write or draw (<sup>think</sup> out loud)


 Talk to myself

 Cuddle cats

 Walk or bike (esp. in a park)


 Tidy

 Read

 Read about people whose lives are more complicated

 Garden

 Get a hug

 Talk to select people

# Minding People's Mental Health

- When should we worry?
- What should we do?



# When to Worry



FEELINGS OF NUMBNESS,  
DISBELIEF, ANXIETY OR  
FEAR



CHANGES IN APPETITE,  
ENERGY, AND ACTIVITY  
LEVELS



DIFFICULTY  
CONCENTRATING



DIFFICULTY SLEEPING OR  
NIGHTMARES AND  
UPSETTING THOUGHTS  
AND IMAGES



PHYSICAL REACTIONS,  
SUCH AS HEADACHES,  
BODY PAINS, STOMACH  
PROBLEMS, RACING HEART



WORSENING OF CHRONIC  
HEALTH PROBLEMS



ANGER OR SHORT-TEMPER



INCREASED USE OF  
ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, OR  
OTHER DRUGS

# Seek Help

- Get help – check out therapists who are in your network
- Learn what resources (EAP) are available to you.
- Tell your manager if you are struggling
- Use your support system to help reduce your stress level

# As the Employer

- Offer accommodations
- Increase frequency of connecting, check in on folks, informal coffee chats
- Have goal-oriented work
- Recognize people have different reactions at different times
- Be flexible as to when people work
- Publicize EAP benefits, free services in the community

# How You Can Help Others

- Arm yourself with information, contact HR or EAP, know resources
- Share concerns: “I’ve noticed...Is something going on?”
- Reach in
- Offer support: “How can I best support you right now/today?”
- Avoid using judgments: “Toughen up...snap out of it.”

# Preventing Suicide

- To save a life:
  - Express empathy, offer hope
  - Ask— asking doesn't increase the risk
  - Listen nonjudgmentally. Let them know you care and will assist them in getting help
  - Don't try to do it all yourself – get mental health professionals and others involved
  - Don't promise secrecy and don't worry about being disloyal
  - If persuasion fails, call a hotline or emergency services

# Preventing Suicide

- Put these numbers in your cell phone now:
  - \*\*CRISIS
  - Text “MN” to 741741
  - National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
  - If calling 911 ask for a CIT trained officer
  - Look up your local county crisis number

COVID-19 has altered daily existence dramatically, but, for many of us, it's simply globalized a way of life that was already all too familiar.

Mental illness affects [about 20%](#) of people, and the symptomology resembles the new reality that the whole population is now experiencing: the isolation, the nagging fear, the obsessive worry, the fluctuating energy and motivation levels. Before COVID, many of us simply called this life as usual.

Those who have lived with mental illness are in a unique position to, dare I say, deal with our "new" global reality perhaps even better than others? We come equipped with decades of handling the emotions/feelings/circumstances that may feel new to those who've not been plagued before by depression, anxiety, OCD, PTSD and the like.

We get this. It's our stomping grounds. We know what it's like to be okay one day and not able to move from the couch for the next five. It's in our wheelhouse to be immersed in fear and panic, yet go on putting one foot in front of the other day after day after day. The world is just now experiencing our norm.

# What We Do

- New! HELP: Helping Employees Live in a Pandemic
- Education classes, booklets and fact sheets
- Suicide prevention
- Support groups, Helpline
- Public awareness presentations
- Legislative advocacy
- NAMIWalks

# Support NAMI Minnesota

- Advocate for a better Mental Health System
- Attend an event
- Sign up for a newsletter (online & hard copy)
- Join an affiliate
- Be a sponsor
- Volunteer
- Become a member and/or donor

Questions?  
Comments?



# NAMIWalks 2020!

Help us raise critically-needed funds for NAMI Minnesota.

**Join the D.I.T. Walk on 9/26/20!**

^  
(Do-It-Together!)

This year, walkers will bring the event into their own homes, front lawns, and neighborhoods. Make your walk your own!



Learn more and sign up to participate!

**[www.namiwalks.mn/2020](http://www.namiwalks.mn/2020)**



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