

Wellness During COVID-19: Considerations for our Classrooms, Co-workers, and Families



UNIVERSITY OF THE
CUMBERLANDS

Drs. Todd, Pool, and Page
School of Social and Behavioral Sciences
Department of Counseling

COVID-19 the facts (CDC, 2020; WHO, 2020)

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered virus.

Most people infected will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and **recover without requiring special treatment.**

Greater risk of serious illness for older people and those with other medical problems.

Affects anyone regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or income.

Someone who has recovered does not pose a risk of infecting others.

As the number of cases increases, so does the number of recoveries.

COVID-19 the facts (CDC, 2020; WHO, 2020)

In Short . . .

This is a pandemic, it is a world health problem – it is serious.

There will be significant losses: life, jobs, income, security, etc.

There are things we can do to reduce the spread, risk, and impact.

We will recover and this period will end – life may look different.

“Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it.” –
Charles R. Swindoll

COVID-19 the facts (CDC, 2020; WHO, 2020)

Disaster defined

An **occurrence disrupting** the normal conditions of existence or **daily life** of the affected **community or society** and causing a level of **suffering** that **exceeds** the capacity of adjustment or the **ability to effectively cope** using its own resources.

- Usually unexpected
- Cause human, material, economic and/or environmental losses



COVID-19 the facts (CDC, 2020)

Everyone experiencing a disaster is affected by the disaster - no one is untouched.

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) **will be stressful for people**, as our lives change.

Disaster stress and crisis responses are **normal reactions to abnormal events**.

- Sadness, anxiety, fear, hopelessness, anger, difficulty concentrating, etc.

Most of us will cope effectively but skills may be diminished during a disaster.

COVID-19 the facts (CDC, 2020)

Do not pathologize people now, diagnosis would be inappropriate at this phase.

Disaster mental health assistance is often more practical than psychological.

Crisis intervention and teaching stress / coping strategies at this phase are best.

Disaster mental health services must be uniquely tailored to each communities they serve.

COVID-19 the facts (CDC, 2020)

Fear, anxiety, sadness, and anger about the disease **can be overwhelming.**

Possibly leading to very strong emotional reactions.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations.

Coping with stress will make you, your loved ones, and your community stronger.

Most of us will return to our baseline once the pandemic passes, others will not return to their baseline as easily and may require additional services.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMATIC STRESS REACTIONS

Highlight or circle any symptoms that you have experienced in the past 30 days, indicating *ONLY* the items that you have experienced more often than not. For example, do not circle headache if you had 5 headaches in a month, but do circle headaches if you had a headache 20 days out of 30.

| Physical | Cognitive | Behavioral | Emotional | Relational | Spiritual |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|---------------------------------|---|
| fatigue/tiredness | confusion | repetitive actions | fear | change in relations: | questions about faith |
| nausea | nightmares | antisocial acts | guilt | parents | change in interactions with faith community |
| fainting | uncertainty | inability to rest | grief | brothers/sisters | guilt, survivor guilt |
| twitches | super alert or watchful | pacing | panic | grandparents | anger at God |
| vomiting | not trustful of others | erratic movements | denial | friends | searching for meaning and hope |
| dizziness | pictures pop up in your head | change in social activity | anxiety / nervousness | teachers | questions about good and evil |
| weakness | blaming someone | eating less than usual | irritability / cranky | neighbors | concern about vengeance justice and forgiveness |
| chest pain | difficulty problem solving | change in speech patterns/communication | depression | legal problems | |
| headache | difficulty focusing | eating more than usual | intense anger or rage | educational issues | |
| high blood pressure | difficulty making decisions | super aware of surroundings/hypervigilant | feeling uneasy or impending doom | family problems | |
| rapid heart rate | difficulty with math | alcohol or marijuana use | no feeling/ feeling numb | aggression in relationships | relying on faith and Prayer excessively |
| muscle shaking / twitching | difficulty with language | missing work/school | snapping quickly / hitting 10, losing it for no reason | community problems | realization of vulnerability and mortality |
| grinding teeth | difficulty remembering | other substance use | feeling overwhelmed | isolation | overly concerned about hereafter |
| difficulty seeing | difficulty identifying objects or people | other addictive behavior | worried or fret | unemployment or underemployment | questioning God/universe |
| jumpy/startled easy | poor abstract thinking | change in usual activity | serious anger over little | stigma, racism, sexism, media | comfort in knowing decreased is at peace |

Adapted from ICISF material (2010) icisf.org

Sherry Todd, PhD, LPC, ATR-BC, CTTS 2020

What might you be experiencing right now?

(CDC, 2020)

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak may include

- Numbness or disbelief.
- Fear, anxiety, or worry (the unknown).
- Difficulty concentrating, maintaining focus, and completing tasks.
- Changes in appetite, energy, and activity levels.
- Difficulty sleeping or upsetting thoughts.
- Physical reactions: headaches, body pains, stomach upset, and skin rashes.
- Frustration, short-temper, or anger.
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, & other substance or addictive behaviors.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.

Taking Care of Yourself and Your Family

Age-Related Concerns

Young Children

- Feelings of helplessness extending into other aspects of life
- Difficulty understanding, describing, and expressing feelings
- Loss of previously acquired skills
- Regressive behaviors
- Sleep difficulties
- Clinginess or trouble separating from parents/caregivers

Age-Related Concerns

School-Age Children

- Persistent concerns over safety
- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulty concentrating and focusing
- Somatic symptoms
- Overwhelmed by feelings
- Acting out or aggressive behaviors

Age-Related Concerns

Adolescents

- Feeling anxious, uncertain, depressed
- May deny or be embarrassed by reactions
- Isolation from peers
- Loss of important events/milestones
- Incorrect information from peers/social media
- May experience a shift in worldview

Recommendations for Families

- Keep routines as consistent as possible
- Ensure that children are getting adequate hydration, nutrition, sleep, and exercise
- Encourage children to play and have fun
- Limit exposure to information and news to avoid “information overload”
- Be patient and listen
- Monitor your own feelings and reactions



Recommendations for Families

- Be flexible with expectations
- Provide developmentally appropriate explanations to children
- Ask questions and have conversations with teens and adolescents
- Help children identify and express feelings in an appropriate way
- Validate concerns and provide reassurance
- Find alternative ways to celebrate special events and milestones



Self-Care

Three basic aspects:

- ★ Awareness – slow down and focus inwardly to monitor feelings, stress, and thoughts
- ★ Balance – all areas including work, personal, family, leisure
- ★ Connection – build connections and supportive relationships with co-workers, students, friends, family, and community



(NCTSN, 2017)

Self-Care Tips - Awareness

- ❖ Make time for self-reflection
- ❖ Stay aware of your limitations and needs (personal and professional)
- ❖ Monitor your thoughts and feelings about the situation
- ❖ Maintain a journal
- ❖ Self-monitor and pace your efforts
- ❖ Pay extra attention to health and nutrition
- ❖ Recognize when you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired (HALT), and take the appropriate measures
- ❖ Seek counseling if extreme stress persists or feels unmanageable

(NCTSN, 2017)

Self-Care Tips - Balance

- ❖ Practice brief relaxation throughout the day
 - Mindful breathing
 - Progressive muscle relaxation
 - Meditate
- ❖ Increase leisure activities and exercise
- ❖ Learn how to “park stress” or “put stress away”
- ❖ Do things you enjoy, such as hobbies or creative activities
- ❖ Get plenty of water, healthy food, and sleep
- ❖ Maintain boundaries (professional and personal)
- ❖ Engage in religious or spiritual practices



(NCTSN, 2017)

Self-Care Tips - Connection

- ❖ Check in with others
 - You check on 5 people, those 5 people each check in with 5 other people, etc.
- ❖ Spend time with family
- ❖ Access support from colleagues
 - Share concerns
 - Identify difficult experiences
 - Strategize to solve problems

Helpful Free Apps

- ★ Headspace: Meditation & Sleep
- ★ Calm
- ★ Pocket Coach- Anxiety Helper
- ★ myNoise
- ★ Belly Bio
- ★ Breathe2Relax
- ★ Virtual Hope Box
- ★ Silk - Interactive Generative Art- <http://weavesilk.com>
- ★ Calmsound - <https://www.calmsound.com/maldives>



Co-Workers and the Classroom

What can we do for our co-workers?

- Connect
- Normalcy
- Be open about what you are going through
- Respect boundaries
- Listen

What can we do for our students?

- Maintain structure and normalcy
(as much as possible)
- Maintain professionalism
- No gripe sessions



Looking at the map for some weekend travel ideas

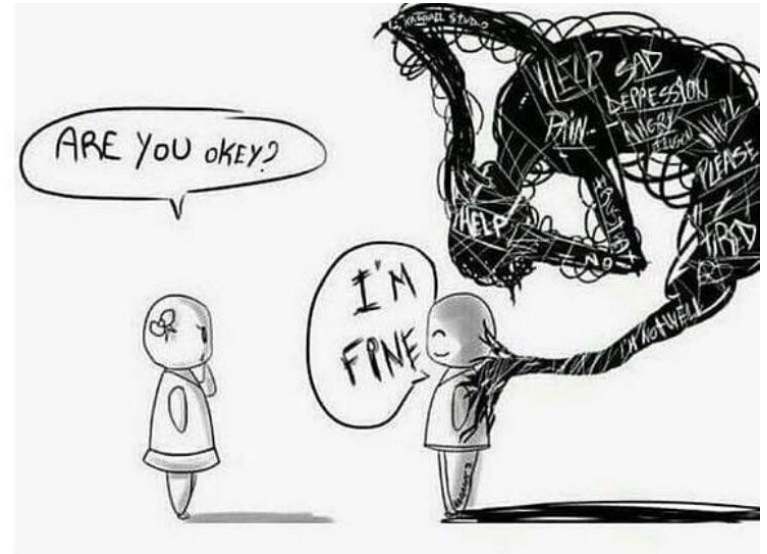


What can we do for our students?

- Be honest and authentic
- Provide regular communication
- Maintain flexibility in your courses
- Consider accepting late assignments
- Validate the experience

What can we do for our students?

- Reduce isolation
- Consider adding a discussion board to your class for students to share their thoughts
- Encourage peer to peer engagement



What can we do for our students?

- Engage students virtually (ie: meetings)
- Be creative
- Be kind
- Show gratitude
- Link students to resources as needed

Additional Resources

- [Helping Children Cope](#)
- [Helping College Students Cope with COVID-19](#)
- [Coping with Isolation and Quarantine \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [SAMHSA's Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery](#)
- [Psychological First Aid \(National Child Traumatic Stress Network\)](#)
- [Video: Coping with a Traumatic Event](#)
- Report Disaster Fraud Office of Inspector General's [COVID-19 fraud alert page](#)

Additional Resources

Sesame Street – Caring for Each Other

<https://www.sesamestreet.org/caring>

Child Mind Institute

Anxiety and coping with the Coronavirus

<https://childmind.org/article/anxiety-and-coping-with-coronavirus/>

Supporting families during COVID

<https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>

Talking to kids about the coronavirus

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

Dr. Bruce Perry

Neurosequential Network Stress and Resilience COVID 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orwIn02h6V4&feature=youtu.be>

Additional Resources

Coping Skills for Kids™

Coping Skills for Dealing with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) from a Child Therapist

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/coping-with-coronavirus>

American Academy of Pediatrics

Responding to Children's Emotional Needs During Times of Crisis

<http://tiny.cc/w1rolz>

Lifeline Crisis Chat

https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/?__ga=2.257105672.2097026487.1585768039-1246504429.1585768039

Contact Information

Dr. Sherry Todd, LPC(VA), ATR-BC, CTTS
Associate Professor of Counseling, Director of CES PhD Program
sherry.todd@ucumberland.edu

Dr. Anita Pool, PLPC(LA), NCC, NCSC
Assistant Professor of Counseling, Director of Counseling Admissions
anita.pool@ucumberland.edu

Dr. Kristin Page, LMHC, NCC
Associate Professor of Counseling, Director of CMHC Master's Program
kristin.page@ucumberland.edu