COPING MECHANISM FOR STRESS AND ANXIETY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

by:
Ma. Concepcion G. Capuli

It was March 11, 2020, when the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 global pandemic.

It was March 16, 2020, when most part of the country was put in total lockdown by the government that caused the economic downturn for some time. Business establishments were compulsorily shutdown, schools were forcibly closed, and people were restricted to travel from one place to another unless urgent and necessary. From then on, life has become very different from what we used to know and live than what we have in the present. The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 disease is leaving devastating consequences in society from a social, political, educational, labor and health point of view.

Amidst this global pandemic, there are lots of problems arose that we must deal with. Many people lost their jobs, which lead to hunger. Also, despite the number of jobless individuals in the country, it is evident that there is a price increase of the basic needs and commodities. Not only that, public transportation was also limited which lead to the increase of fair up to its double price. Equally important was people are worried about their health, their loved ones and how they will cope if they get sick or infected by the virus. These ongoing restrictions are limiting social interaction, leading to increased loneliness and isolation. Covid-19 is causing enormous stress for people who were already worried about how they will deal with it. Given facts, we cannot deny that aside from the physical health issue we are facing brought by the virus, there is also an emerging bigger problem that needs to be given emphasis- our mental health.
In fact, a new survey by the International Committee of the Red Cross in seven countries, including the Philippines, shows that Covid-19 has been negatively affecting the mental health of one in two adults. It is also alarming that latest World Health Organization (WHO) figures reveal the pandemic has interrupted or suspended mental health support services in 93% of countries.

It is completely understandable that people across the globe are generally worried about their health. Fear on Covid-19 pandemic could take a heavy emotional and psychological toll, most especially if we are already dealing with our own issues and anxiety in life.

For most of us, we fear the uncertainty that surrounds coronavirus which is hard to handle. We fear of being infected. We fear for our loved ones. We fear of what tomorrow could bring. In fact, we fear about tomorrow. These thoughts are what circling on our minds which leads to overwhelming dread and panic. However, we are not limited, and we are capable to dealing and coping with this stress and anxiety during these trying times.

According to an article by HelpGuide—a small independent nonprofit website, there are several ways that could help us manage our stress and anxiety.

We should: Stay informed—but don’t obsessively check the news. It is pivotal that we must keep ourselves updated to what is happening around us. We must be well-informed of the most important issues so that we can do safety precautions and do our best to be part of a solution not the problem. However, information overload and widespread fake news might lead to confusion and misconception that could lead to fear. It is important that we are discerning about what we read and watch.

Also, Focus on the things you can control. In this, fast-changing environment, there are lots of shifts and adjustments happening around us. Some of which are out of our hands, and we have no control over with. It is hard to accept things we can’t control or think of different scenarios that the future might bring. As we focus on those unanswerable
questions and circumstances that out of our personal control, it will just consume our energy to the point that we feel drained, exhausted, and overwhelmed with the situation.

When you feel that you are being caught up in fear of the uncertainties of tomorrow, try to shift your focus to things you can control. For example, you can’t control the number of the individuals affected by the virus, but you may think that you can protect yourself. By doing so, you are protecting your loved ones and the entire community.

Another thing is, Stay connected—even when physically isolated. It is very evident that no one is exempted from the virus. From the young to the adults, everyone might get infected by the virus even an individual seems very healthy and active. That is why, practicing safety health protocols could bring huge impact on the community. However, just because you are practicing social protocols does not mean you cannot be connected to your loved ones. We as humans, are designed to feel all the emotions we may feel. Isolation may sometimes trigger anxiety and stress that could lead to depression that could also impact our physical health. That is why it is important that we know we have a strong support system that would make us feel supported and loved even if not physically present.

Equally important is to: Take care of your body and spirit. During these extraordinary times we need to take care of ourselves the most. We must keep our mind, soul, and body all together so we can make best decisions with best results, and we may have optimism. We can do these by giving our body good food so our body may have enough nutrients so it could function well. We must have enough and sound sleep and relaxation of body and mind. We must also feed our mind and spirit with good food though meditation and self-reflection.

Lastly, Help others (it will make you feel better). Sometimes helping others who are in need is the therapy we need to break through the chain of stress and anxiety. Helping
others could make a huge impact not only for your self but for the entire community as well. Helping others can also support your own mental health and well-being.

Furthermore, at times like this, even if you are self-isolating and practicing social distancing and avoiding going outside, you can still help other. By just doing your social obligation to follow safety health protocols is a way of helping the entire community. You can also help by just simply promoting to follow guidelines to avoid of lessen the transmission of the virus.

All these strategies and coping mechanisms could be of great help in observing the total well-being of a person in either physical or mental aspect.

Reference:


ReliefWeb. (2020, 19 October). How can we tackle a growing COVID-19 caused mental health crisis? Retrieved from ReliefWeb: https://reliefweb.int/report/world/how-can-we-tackle-growing-covid-19-caused-mental-health-crisis?gclid=Cj0KCQjwIdGJBhD4ARIsANb6OdlLz8g-8kX6Tsfy5W2t_2fvBXla0gBBE8kMX3mM_Oc6FIYOdX-SJAcAsXNEALw_wcB