



Editorial

Hope to cope with Covid-19

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The novel Corona virus pandemic as declared by the World Health Organisation (WHO) has brought in front of us many challenges in all aspects of life. It is an event that most of us have not witnessed anytime in our lives. Although social distancing, quarantine and self-isolation are essential to prevent spread of this highly virulent disease, an atmosphere of fear and anxiety is built up. So it is at these times that we have to improve our mental and emotional wellbeing.

The psychological impact of COVID-19 is diverse. Being separated from others by itself can be stressful, even though you may not have any symptoms. You could experience a range of emotions from anxiety and apprehension about your own health as well as the health of those around you, to sadness, anger or despair. You may feel guilty about not being able to take care of your loved ones during quarantine. More than half of persons in isolation or quarantine reported low mood and irritability. Few others reported being confused, feeling numb and having sleepless nights.

Here are a 8 'A's that you can easily remember to help you overcome these challenges.

1. Awareness

Ensuring that you obtain a good understanding of the disease and the reasons for which social distancing is being enforced is essential. Seek information only from reliable sources like the World Health Organization (WHO) or the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW). Follow credible advisory protocols so that you can take practical steps to prepare and protect your loved ones.

2. Avoid Panicking

This is very crucial to prevent unnecessary calamities. On 15 February 2020 a 50 year old man ended his life after contracting flu-like symptoms. He became convinced that he had been infected with the corona virus after watching a video about it and out of fear, committed suicide. You can avoid this kind of panic reaction by getting your facts

right. Limit the amount of time that you spend watching television and scrolling through social media, constantly looking at posts about corona virus disease. Take a halt from the screen every half an hour. An easy way to calm yourself when anxious is to do 'mindful breathing.' You try to pay conscious attention to your breathing for a few minutes. This practice helps to reduce distracting thoughts.

3. Assess your thoughts

Check your thoughts and emotions once in a while. It is natural to worry and think more about your health status at this time. Distract your mind by solving a puzzle, playing a game or just talk to someone without making corona virus as the topic of discussion. Learn to postpone your worry. Make space in your schedule to have some time for yourself and call it your "worry time" where you can worry as much as you want. When you get disturbing thoughts out of your worry time, just postpone it. If you repeat this practice often enough, this thought process becomes automatic and the worries might completely disappear from your mind.

4. Avoid 'what if' scenarios

Recognize this is a first-time situation for everyone and it is ok not to know how to handle it. Many people imagine these "what if" scenarios in their minds, for example 'what if I have the disease' or 'what if I die'. Don't give room for these what if scenarios to do well in your mind. When you get such thoughts constantly assure yourself that these are just passing thoughts not based on any evidence. Think positive thoughts.

5. Acceptance

Our current situation has given us a sense of lack of control which is the main reason for the fear that we are facing. We have to accept the fact that certain things are beyond our control and we need to let go of those things. Shift your focus to the things that are under your control like your behaviour, emotions, thoughts and feelings. By expressing your emotions or writing down your thoughts and feelings you can get those thoughts out of your mind and gain control over them.

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6. Adaptation

Things which were mundane become disrupted and the times have changed. So you have to adapt to the new situation. Don't fight the change, but try to adapt to it. Look for means by which the change can benefit you. Make new routines to suit the present circumstances and to help you keep track of time. If you have any illness which needs long term medications, make sure you can get a regular supply.

7. Altruism

It is doing something that promotes the welfare of others at a risk or cost to oneself. This can be achieved by carrying out meaningful activities like helping daily wage workers with some food supplies or monetary help. Remember that you are also serving the society by being altruistic.

8. Activities to improve emotional health

Exercise: Daily physical activity releases endorphins that act as the body's natural painkillers and mood elevators.

Sleep: 8 hours sleep is ideal. It is important to have a set time every day for sleeping and waking up.

Diet: Have a balanced diet, rich in vitamins and antioxidants.

Fun time: Set aside some time to relax and have some fun. Try to involve the family in your activities, whenever possible.

Hum/Whistle a happy tune. Humming is known to release nitric oxide which improves your mood.

Acquire new skills like playing an instrument or learning a new language.

Art/ Music: Daily time for drawing, painting, listening to music or dancing is good to minimise emotional tension.

Discover the meaning of this life experience

This is the time to reflect on the meaning of life, however short or long it maybe. The value of family and friends which we so often neglect has gained much importance during this time. The happiness that came from a silly joke, a baby's innocent smile, the sound of birds chirping or the fragrance of flowers were all taken for granted till now. By a process of self-examination and utilising our own personal spiritual resources the meaning of this life experience can be discovered.

Tragic times demand extraordinary qualities. The real tragedy would be if we remain unchanged at the end of this calamity. Not only are we going to survive this pandemic, but we will also be transformed into better human beings. So consider these times as a God given opportunity to pause, unwind, and start afresh.

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