

# FAQ

## About COVID-19

### What can you do to manage stress around how COVID19 will affect my family, my finances, and so much else. How can I manage my stress?

The current health crisis is taking an emotional, psychological, and financial toll on people. Human nature is drawn to predictability and the desire to have a certain amount of control over our lives. Crisis situations like the COVID19 pandemic are particularly alarming because we have no control and little information about what to expect in the coming weeks and months. We know that to best protect ourselves we can take measures such as washing hands, limiting social contact, and avoiding crowded areas.

Here are some things you can do to bring relief, comfort and maintain good emotional and mental health:

- **Stay connected to friends and loved ones:** phone calls, Facetime, videoconferencing... find ways to gather and engage virtually to decrease loneliness and disconnection.
- **Be in nature:** If and when possible, get outside and walk, hike, bike, or even find a place to sit and read. Nature is calming for the mind and body, and as we know, exercise has tremendous health benefits.
- **Create a news-free-zone:** online news is available 24/7 and it is tempting to check in frequently to get the latest updates. It's important to take a break from the news and socialize, read other materials, or unplug in other ways.
- **Keep to a schedule:** This cannot be emphasized enough. Self-quarantines can be tough on individuals and families. Try to keep some elements of a routine, or think of what you've been meaning to write, read, draw, etc. and haven't had the time. Now might be that time!
- **Try new things:** With more time at home, sometimes with others, might be a time to learn to cook or try new recipes, meditate, sew, learn an instrument, try yoga.
- **Reach out for help:** if you are worried about yourself, or are feeling increasingly depressed, anxious, or unlike your self, help is available. Clinics, hospitals and hotlines are a phone call away and tele-therapy or health coaching are real and effective options. Take care of yourself in every way.

### How should businesses communicate the importance of mental health to their employees during the COVID-19 crisis?

The way we think about and understand behavioral health (which includes both mental health and substance misuse) needs to change if we are going to make it easier to talk about mental health and simultaneously chip away at stigma. Stigma is what most often gets in the way of communicating, understanding, and help-seeking - as it means we have a negative association with a certain idea and many people feel they will be judged or treated differently/poorly if they talk about their mental health struggles.

## The best way for businesses to start communicating the importance of mental health to employees is purely to start.

The good news is that the first step to reducing stigma and providing support is to start the conversation about what mental health and substance misuse looks like, how to talk about it, and what can help. Especially because mental health is a part of overall health.

Employers have a unique opportunity to make a positive impact and improve the mental health of employees. Most working adults spend more time working than any other activity apart from sleeping

and research shows that when employers initiate and support treatment for mental health disorders and prescription drug addiction, it's more effective in the long term than at the urging of family or friends.

Another way to support the mental health of your employees' at this time (and long-term) is to communicate about any health benefits you offer, for example can teams take advantage of your EAP (Employee Assistance Program) which generally provides 4-5 free counseling sessions. Most insurances cover therapy and, during this pandemic, many are also providing coverage for teletherapy (the number of sessions covered may vary).

### **And lastly, make sure employees know what hotlines and crisis text lines are available to them in case they can't reach out to a professional:**

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** Call 1-800-237-TALK (8255)

**Crisis Text Line:** Text 'ACT' to 741741 for free, 24/7 support.

**SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration) National Helpline:** 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

**SAMHSA Treatment Locator:** <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

During these times of COVID19, no one is immune from the worry and stress. Ensuring that individuals feel better and not judged for reaching out for help is critical, especially since everyone can relate to the overwhelming feelings the health crisis has brought on.

### **Is FaceTime and video conferences just as effective as in-person interaction when it comes to supporting someone struggling during social distancing?**

Yes - FaceTime, video conferences, and other types of virtual support can have the same impact as an in-person interaction. The important thing to remember is that you're still offering support, which can truly make a difference to someone in need. Also, with today's wealth of technology, it's easy to forget the comfort of a phone call. In fact, some people much prefer phone calls to video calls, and that works just as well!

Many people are finding themselves in virtual care-giving situations during this health crisis. We know that under the best of circumstances care-giving can be emotionally, mentally and physically exhausting. So, now more than ever it is important to be gentle with oneself as well as with others. We can often be more forgiving and empathic toward others than we are to ourselves; remember that you deserve that care too. Take moments to breathe, walk, read or watch something funny, or reach out to a friend or family member.