

## **How to Manage Stress and Anxiety from Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

### **Feeling anxious about the coronavirus:**

Feeling anxious during a disease outbreak like the coronavirus is normal. In fact, having some anxiety can motivate you to maintain good hygiene habits, and minimizing contact with other people. On the other hand, severe anxiety can be incapacitating. People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for COVID-19.
- Children and teens.
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors and other health care providers, or first responders.
- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use.

### **Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:**

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

### **Things you can do to support yourself:**

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Keep your news consumption to two to three credible sources for 30 minutes or less per day.
- Challenge your irrational thoughts and replace them with facts. Irrational thoughts and beliefs are untrue or exaggerated thoughts about a situation. In contrast, rational thoughts are accurate and based on facts.
- Practice at least 5 minutes of relaxation each day. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Stay in contact with your support system through phone, internet, and social media. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Try to do activities that you enjoy.
- If you are unable to cope with your anxiety on your own, seek professional help. Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.

- If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, contact:
  - 911
  - “Línea PAS”: 1-800-981-0023 TTD: 1-888-672-7622
  - Local Veterans Crisis Line: 787-622-4822, 1-866-712-4822
  - National Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 Press 1
  - “Línea de Ayuda Hospital Panamericano”: 1-800-981-1218
  - “Línea de Ayuda Confidencial Hospital San Juan Capestrano”: 1-888-967-4357
  - Other resources:
    - § Puerto Rico Health Department: 787-765-2929
    - § “Red Nacional para la Prevención del Suicidio”: 1-888-628-9454/1-800-273-8255
    - § “Centro Control de Envenenamiento”: 1-800-222-1222

### **Self-care for responders:**

Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you. There are things you can do to reduce secondary traumatic stress (STS) reactions:

- Acknowledge that STS can impact anyone helping people after a traumatic event.
- Learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt).
- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the pandemic.
- Create a menu of personal self-care activities that you enjoy, such as spending time with friends and family, exercising, or reading a book.
- Take a break from media coverage of COVID-19.
- Get information from credible sources that are relying on the latest research. Consider seeking your information from places like:
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  - World Health Organization (WHO)
  - National Institutes of Health (NIH)
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- Ask for help if you feel concerned that COVID-19 is affecting your ability to perform your job and take care of your family as you did before the outbreak.

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