

Managing Mental Health in a Crisis

CLIENT CASE MANAGEMENT IN THE TIME OF COVID-19



Common Concerns

What might be expected among clients, co-workers, families & friends:

- Stress
- Fear/Anxiety
- Anger
- Grief/Loss
- Hopelessness
- Helplessness

Stress

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can sometimes cause the following:

- Fear & worry about health (yours & others), finances, job, etc.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of tobacco, and/or alcohol and other substances

The Effects of Isolation

- Social Distancing
 - Awkwardness
 - Paranoia
 - Fear of others
- Stay-at-home orders/Quarantine
 - Loneliness
 - Depression
 - Social anxiety
 - Restlessness/"Cabin Fever"
 - Increased risk of dementia among elders
 - Low self-esteem

Socioeconomic Problems

- Substance abuse
- Physical & Emotional abuse
- Job loss
- Financial hardship
- Child care related to in-home schooling

What you might see/hear

- Anger, frustration at being ordered to stay home
- Reports of difficulty sleeping, worsening nutritional habits
- Nervous behaviors, i.e., biting nails, picking at the skin, etc.
- Anger at the government
- Sense of desperation at reduction in opportunities, support
- Despair, distress
- Worsening of chronic physical & mental health problems

What to Do?

- *Self-Care First!!*
 - Reach out if you need to talk ... or think you need to ... or want to
 - Make sure you are sleeping well, regularly, and long enough
 - Eat healthy meals, balanced diet
 - Exercise your body & exercise your mind
 - Maintain contact with friends & family
 - Recognize & acknowledge feelings of stress, frustration, anger, etc.
 - Seek external support from co-workers, supervisors, colleagues, etc.
 - Get creative!

What to Do?

- *For your clients*
 - Acknowledge and validate what they tell you they are feeling
 - Check in with them on behaviors you observe that are out of the ordinary for them
 - Connect them with mental health professionals for assessment & follow-up
 - Maintain regular contact if possible
 - Help build skills like time management (what-do-you-do-when-you-have-lots-of-time-on-your-hands-no-job-&-you-can't-go-anywhere time management, problem solving, crisis management, etc.)
 - Help build home-schooling skills
 - Teach clients self-care skills

What to Do?

- *For each other*
 - Stay in contact!
 - “Misery loves company”
 - Validate each other’s experience
 - Team up for self-care
 - Acknowledge your common experience & struggles



All Things Must Pass

- The pandemic won't last forever ... IF communities get on board with public health orders & with the availability of vaccinations
- The ways in which we lived & worked pre-pandemic will not all be possible again
- The pandemic is an opportunity for change & growth
- What do you want to do differently when the current circumstances are managed?
Describe your “new normal”