

Taking care of your emotional health during a medical health crisis

It is normal to become anxious about an outbreak of an infectious disease and its potential spread. These are some tips to keep you emotionally healthy:

- Manage and alleviate your stress by taking time to take care of yourself.
- Set limits on how much time you spend watching the news or reading about the outbreak.
- Find a reputable source of information to learn the facts and keep updated on the illness.

Take time to focus on things in your life that you do have control over like the following:

- Eat healthy foods and drink water.
- Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol.
- Get enough sleep and rest (7-9 hours).
- Exercise, get your heart rate up for 20-30 minutes every day.

Use practical ways to relax:

- Taking deep breaths, stretching, meditating or engaging in pleasurable hobbies.
- Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do a fun thing after a hard task.
- Use time off to relax—eat a good meal, read, listen to music, take a bath or talk to family.
- Talk about your feelings to loved ones and friends often.

Recognize and heed early warning signs of stress.

Your body:

- Having stomachaches, headaches, diarrhea, body pain, chills, sweating, tremors or muscle twitches.
- Losing your appetite or eating too much.
- Being easily startled.

Your emotions:

- Being anxious or fearful.
- Feeling depressed, guilty, angry or overwhelmed by sadness.
- Feeling heroic, euphoric or invulnerable.
- Not caring about anything.

Your thinking:

- Having trouble remembering things, being confused or difficulty making decisions.
- Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating.

Pay attention to your body, feelings and spirit:

- Think of how you handled your thoughts, emotions and behavior around previous difficult events.
- Feeling depressed or angry is common after a big event even when it does not directly affect you.
- Take time to renew your spirit through meditation, prayer or helping others in need.

Connect with others who may be experiencing stress about the outbreak. Talk about your feelings about the outbreak, share reliable health information and enjoy conversation unrelated to the outbreak to remind yourself of the many important and positive things in your life.

If you are experiencing extreme symptoms of stress, such as trouble sleeping, inability to carry out your daily routine, using drugs or alcohol to cope, or eating too much or too little, please **contact PAS at 919-416-1727.**

Helpful resources:

SAMHSA Store: <https://store.samhsa.gov>

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html>

Duke coronavirus response: <https://coronavirus.duke.edu/>