**Stress-Management**
*Sunbeam Family Services Shares Helpful Tools to Manage Stress during and after COVID-19*

**(OKLAHOMA CITY)** - Anxiety, worry, and stress are all a part of most people’s everyday lives. The COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak has potentially increased these feelings, both because of the fear of catching the virus and also because of uncertainty about how the outbreak will affect us socially and economically. The American Institute of Stress (AIS) reports some common signs and symptoms of increased stress, anxiety, and worry as:

* Muscle tension
* Physical weakness
* Poor memory
* Sweaty hands
* Fear or confusion
* Inability to relax
* Constant worry
* Shortness of breath
* Heart Palpitations
* Upset stomach
* Poor concentration

**Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress**

Dealing with stress reactions caused by the COVID-19 virus outbreak can improve your health, quality of life, and wellbeing. The following evidence-informed principles, reported by the CDC, have been shown to be related to better outcomes in many adverse situations and have the ability to generalize out to other scenarios.

* **Stay Connected.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
* **Take a break.** If news events are causing your stress, take a break from listening or watching the news to limit excessive exposure.
* **Take care of yourself.**
	+ Develop healthy eating and sleep habits to maintain consistent structure
	+ Use Relaxation Techniques
		- Abdominal Deep Breathing (Rakal, D, 2018)
			* Take deep breaths: inhale for 4 seconds through your nose, hold for 4 seconds, and exhale through your mouth for 6 seconds
		- Progressive Muscle Relaxation and Guided Imagery
			* Apps like Headspace, Calm, or even YouTube videos can help you practice.
* **Make time to unwind**. Try to do some other self-care activities you enjoy, not work or school related.
	+ Exercising (going for a walk outside, stretching, yoga, meditate, etc.)
	+ Watching a new TV show or reading a new book
	+ Take a bath or try a new face mask

**For Parents and Caregivers**

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers navigate stressors calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Watch for behavior changes in your child and know that **not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way.** Some common changes to watch for include:

* Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
* Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
* Excessive worry or sadness
* Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
* Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
* Poor school performance or avoiding school
* Difficulty with attention and concentration
* Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
* Unexplained headaches or body pain
* Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

**Ways to support your child**

* **Talks with you child or teen** about the COVID-19 outbreak or other stressful topics.
* **Answer questions** and share facts in a way that your child or teen can understand.
* **Reassure your child or teen** that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
* **Limit your family’s exposure to news coverage** of the stressful events, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
* **Try to keep up with regular routines**. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
* **Be a role model.** Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID_managing_stress.asp>

Rakal, D. (2018). Learning Deep Breathing. *Psych Central*. Retrieved on April 21, 2020, from https://psychcentral.com/lib/learning-deep-breathing/

https://www.stress.org/stress-effects#effects