



DEPARTMENT OF
BEHAVIOURAL
MEDICINE,
UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL



SIMPLE SUPPORT
STRATEGIES
FOR HEALTH WORKERS
DURING COVID-19

ACCESSING INFORMATION, THE MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES

-
- Get ONLY the information you need
 - By now you probably have what is needed
 - Try to avoid obsessive info searches
 - Avoid information over-load
 - Seek & trust only legitimate media sources
 - E.g. WHO, NIH, Mayo Clinic, etc.
 - Limit social media – at times these can be unhelpful and destructive
 - Provide information (without close contact) to those less informed
 - Ensure your domestic helper has the relevant information

INFORMING OTHERS LESS FORTUNATE THAN YOU



Provide information (without contact) to those less informed



Ensure your domestic helper has the relevant information



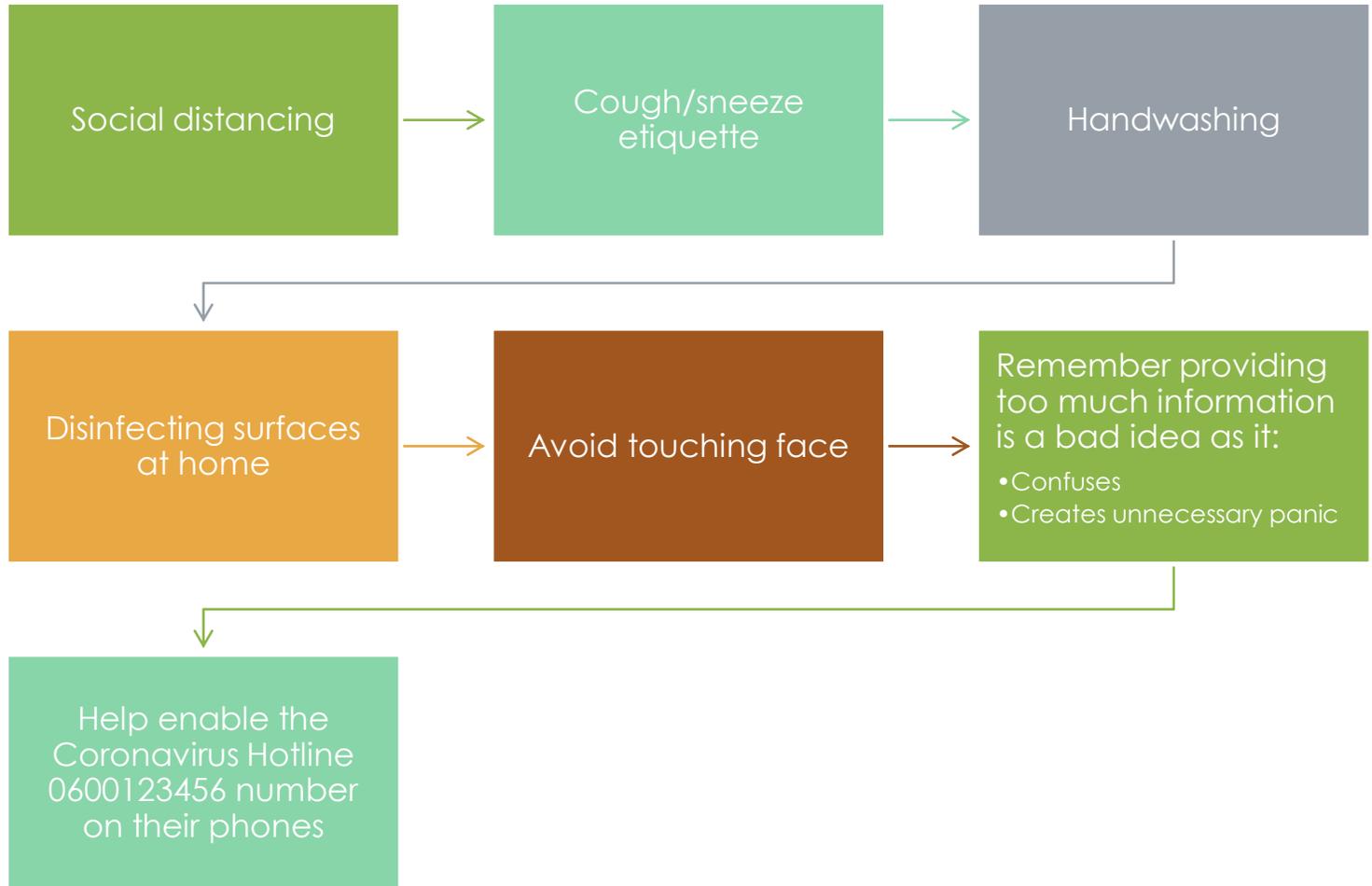
Help her / him to formulate ways to inform dependents:

Children
Elderly



Provide simple information on

Prevention
Steps if infection suspected



ENSURE THAT YOU TEACH THE BASIC PREVENTION MEASURES

ALTRUISM IN TIMES OF CRISIS OR DISASTER



Altruism is most effective in times like this



The practice has been found to be helpful to both parties



Those providing help feel

A sense of comfort & satisfaction
Part of the citizenry
Part of the solution
Useful and needed



Those receiving help feel
a sense of community

Being cared about
Restores faith in fellow citizens
Feels part of the community

HEALTH CARE WORKERS



Please remember that:

- You are not immune to the virus or to concern about it
- It's normal to be concerned about yourself, your family, your patients
- Remind yourself that concern \neq over-concern / obsession
 - Draw an imaginary line to ensure you don't cross that threshold
- Always remind yourself what you learned early in your training
 - In times of crisis – do the basics right
- By doing the basics right – you will be an efficient health worker
- Do the best you can – you cannot do more than that

THE ANXIETY OF THE TIMES



Remember that these are extraordinary times



In unusual times anxiety is normative



So – its okay to feel a little anxious



Remind yourself that everyone around you is feeling anxious



This is a new situation for all of us in this generation



Remind yourself that nobody has all the answers at this time



A little anxiety is good to get us going (like when writing exams)



It also helps us be a bit more careful and attentive

WHEN THE ANXIETY GETS TOO MUCH

-
- If the anxiety gets a bit much
 - Take some time out to manage it
 - Take a short break from the situation, work etc.
 - Take some time to focus on something else, e.g. tend to your pot plant, etc.
 - Talk to a colleague
 - Take a coffee/tea break
 - Distraction / time away helps re-energise, improve focus as well
 - Consider arranging to consult a mental health colleague

MANAGING ANXIOUS FEELINGS

-
- If you have an effective routine to manage anxiety use that, otherwise
 - Consider starting a new approach such as:
 - Breathing & relaxation exercises – several simple techniques are available on the web
 - Meditation – several simple techniques are available on the web
 - Yoga – several simple techniques are available on the web
 - Tending to your hobbies
 - Mindfulness
 - If applicable, spiritual engagement
 - Connect (electronically) with friends and relatives to see how they're doing
 - Any technique that works for you in a constructive way

MINDFULNESS

-
- Avoid getting into the complicated stuff at this stage
 - Use simple strategies that are known to work
 - Very similar in process to meditation
 - Focus on breathing & feel each breath
 - Involves focusing on the present (breathing)
 - Avoiding feeling judgmental about thoughts that may intrude
 - Keep focus on the present
 - Some useful websites:
 - <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/mindfulness-exercises/art-20046356>
 - <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/04/less-stress-clearer-thoughts-with-mindfulness-meditation/>

LET'S MANAGE THE COVID-19 SITUATION IN A WAY THAT

- Is most effective
- Creates least panic
- Is based on scientific evidence
- Is geared towards the wellbeing of all
- Shows your commitment to evidence-based care:
 - If you are unsure about plans of action, consult others
 - Don't feel the need to give immediate answers
 - Ask others, especially senior colleagues
 - Give advice that is evidence-based & compassionate

REMEMBER,
PANIC THRIVES
ON FEELING A
LOSS OF
CONTROL, SO:

-
- Avoid focusing on the virus numbers across the planet
 - You cannot control that, even though it saddens us
 - Focus on your small area of work
 - Focus on your patient's needs
 - Focus on how your patient feels & expresses her/his discomfort
 - Focus on your family
 - You have some control over those areas
 - Look at what you can do to keep those areas working & safe

WHAT ABOUT OUR CHILDREN?

-
- Give as much info as they can assimilate
 - Protect & keep them safe – but don't overprotect
 - Avoid under-informing or over-informing children
 - Show your concern about the virus situation – that will help them take it seriously
 - But avoid exhibiting panic – this creates insecurity in children
 - In the event of home confinement: create structure, normalise within the constraints of prevention, keep them occupied
 - Useful literature:
 - <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2820%2930547-X>

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING A ROUTINE

-
- Routines are helpful for all of us
 - Routines keep us feeling grounded & more secure
 - Routines are crucial for children's feelings of security
 - Have a set plan of things to do, whether at home or at work
 - Develop a structure for children, especially if not at school
 - Plan homework routines
 - Plan play times
 - Use lockdown periods to increase family togetherness

MOST IMPORTANTLY



Be measured in your response, advice and opinions



Take the lead from our nation's President who thinks carefully, consults, and then acts



Don't be like one of the world leaders who gives incorrect, possibly dangerous advice



Remember we don't know everything



If in doubt, say "I don't know – I'll find out from colleagues"