DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIOURAL MEDICINE,
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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 THAT 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

Social distancing → Cough/sneeze etiquette → Handwashing

Disinfecting surfaces at home → Avoid touching face

Remember providing too much information is a bad idea as it:
• Confuses
• Creates unnecessary panic

Help enable the Coronavirus Hotline 0600123456 number on their phones
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

Altruism in times of crisis or disaster
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 ≠ 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
Remember that these are extraordinary times

In unusual times anxiety is normative

So – it’s 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
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

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:
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”