

Managing Mental Health during COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

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Abstract

The novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is a global public health crisis of a scale not previously experienced in modern times. The whole of humanity is sharing a problem that is changing the world, and humans are living under more uncertainty. Most people have been feeling intense anxiety related to COVID-19 and the aftermath the world will leave in its wake. The paper intends to put up a deeper understanding of the anxiety reaction about various aspects of current life. Clear strategies for managing and turning off the anxiety response for short periods is developed based on the understanding of how one's brain reacts to crises along with some powerful tools for managing the pandemic. The paper explores some of the strategies to address mental health during COVID-19.

Keywords: COVID-19, Isolation, Stress, Social Connecting, Mental Power, Physical Distancing

Introduction and Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most massive threat the world has ever faced to health and welfare social welfare, and the global economy (Kickbusch et al., 2020). Anxiety, sadness, and stress are normal responses to understandable to real threats, and at times when faced with uncertainty or the unknown. It becomes routine and understandable that people are experiencing fear and stress in the context of the pandemic. Supplementary to the fear of contracting the virus in a plague, movements are being restricted in efforts to control and slow down the spread of the virus. Cities and states have limited educational and business operations under penalty of certification, fines, and loss of licenses. Almost all states have stopped or limited process of bars, restaurants, theatres, gyms, shopping malls, and other settings. Majority of the states have closed all unnecessary businesses, with exceptions in health care, the food and agriculture sector, and different needs (Gostin and Wiley, 2020). Governmental 'lockdown' measures focused at minimizing virus spread including 'stay at home' orders, closure of businesses and places of gathering, and travel restrictions have had a significant societal impact that penetrates almost every aspect of daily life (Gostin & Wiley, 2020; Shanafelt, Ripp, & Trockel,

2020). These widespread changes caused a significant source of stress in the population and will have adverse effects on mental health going forward. Mental health is not different from physical health. But there is a huge mental challenge for all, has not been clear when the pandemic is going to end, and this is a time to be mentally ready. Certain things trigger reactions in the body that can produce emotional states, and then those emotional states can enter into the mind and make a bit of a spiral (Davidson, 2013).

As nations begin to come out from 'lockdown', the collateral damage to human health caused by these restrictions has taken prominence, and mental health issues, particularly stress-related conditions and outcomes, are prominent among them. The health services are placed under excess pressure, making working life even more stressful than usual during acute health crises (Abuse, 2013). The healthcare professionals face higher levels of work stress than the general population, even under normal circumstances and pressure in doctors is associated with both physical and mental health problems. Compounding this stress is the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) that can arise during a pandemic (Burki, 2020). One way for frontline doctors to mitigate infection risk to their families is through social distancing (Galbraith et

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al., 2020). However, whilst the protective benefits of social contact and support at times of stress are well demonstrated, social distancing deprives the individual of a crucial buffer against mental health difficulties, precisely when they are at greater risk of anxiety.

Taking the whole population into consideration, some groups may be more susceptible than others to the psychosocial effects of the pandemic. Mostly, people who contract the disease, those at sharp risk for it including the elderly, people with less immune function, and those living or receiving care in congregate settings, and people with pre-existing medical, psychiatric, or substance abuse problems are at increased risk for adverse psychosocial outcomes (Pfefferbaum and North, 2020). Healthcare professionals (HCPs) comparative to other occupational groups also have a higher probability of suicidality due to work-related stress. Many doctors find it hard to tell their colleagues or employers about their mental health problems. The most common reasons may be perceived as stigma and anticipated damage to future career prospects (Bedini, 2000). Suicidal thoughts in doctors can present particularly strong fears of ostracism (Galbraith et al., 2020). Feelings of shame and professional failure may strengthen such concerns, and associated worries about fitness to practice and licence restrictions. The problem with contemporaries, they are often unwilling to get professional help too. Research shows that many doctors would relatively seek help from friends and family than look for psychological/psychiatric consultation.

Beyond stresses intrinsic in the illness itself, mass home-confinement directives including stay-at-home orders, quarantine, and isolation are new to all and raised concern about how people will react individually and collectively (Nkporbu et al., 2020). A recent review of psychological importance in samples of quarantined people and health care providers revealed numerous emotional outcomes, including stress, depression, irritability, insomnia, fear, confusion, anxiety, anger, frustration, boredom, substance use, domestic violence and stigma associated with quarantine (Hatta, 2020), some of which persisted even after the quarantine was removed. Specific stressors included more significant duration of confinement, having insufficient supplies, difficulty getting medical care and medications, and resulting financial losses. In the current pandemic, the home quarantine of the population for indefinite periods, differences among the stay-at-home orders and conflicting messages from government and

public health authorities intensify distress among the people. Opportunities to monitor psychosocial needs and provide support during direct patient contact in clinical practice are considerably incomplete in this crisis by large-scale home confinement. Psychosocial services, which are increasingly offered in primary care settings, are being delivered using telemedicine (Korthuis, 2017). In light of the widened economic crisis and numerous uncertainties surrounding this pandemic, suicidal thoughts may emerge and demand immediate consultation with a mental health professional or referral for possible emergency psychiatric hospitalization. The longer the world remains in self-isolation due to COVID-19, the more mental health issues are of concern. Daily people are worried about getting sick, which creates heightened levels of stress (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2020). People are still working with the uncertainty of when the pandemic will all end, wondering for how long. Families all across the world are now homeschooling their kids which can be a challenge for both working and stay at home parents. The effects of COVID-19 reach beyond physical health issues to the overall picture of mental health and wellness.

The vital strategies to help in managing stress and minimizing related health problems has become a priority. The background of this paper is to provide some concrete notions of what it means to get mentally ready by focusing on some specific issues that are relevant to COVID.

The Effects of Isolation

Isolation terms solitary confinement in jails, where people are both physically and socially separated and left for long periods involving physical isolation (Xiao et al., 2020). In a work context, for example, one sees themselves as highly competent and skilled at specific tasks, and that makes them feel good. The psychological issues of isolation make people socially anxious after being kept making people lose their sense of self. It also leaves a feeling like a boat without an anchor, just like one is drifting and doesn't know what to do. It can lose a sense of identity and a sense of purpose to some extent that can lead to feelings of depression (Burden, 2008).

Social isolation can come about in several ways out of the inability to deal with others. It can be older people and families placed in a home, or no people come to visit them, people moving to another location and for

a while doesn't know anybody there and also with people who have trouble socially connecting to any group and are maybe pushed out of all groups trying to communicate with and all end up socially isolated. If the isolation part goes on too long, it can lead to social anxiety (Roy, 2020) starting to get nervous about it. So it's like snowballs, the longer one allows oneself to be socially isolated, the harder it is to reconnect again, and therefore one doesn't want that to go too long, and also, the word depression comes in. One starts to feel like life is doing things to them on losing the internal focus of control, leading to a feeling of helplessness, worthlessness and nobody to care attitude. When people interact with other human beings, they connect with them emotionally, and that's the core of something called empathy, the ability to share emotional states with other human beings. But if kept out of the social interactions for too long, if distanced from them, one starts to lose a sense of empathy and can lead to some pretty strong thinking and even violence and things. During the time of isolation, one must find ways to be socially together while physically apart and if one can help others to achieve that too. Reconnect with family, reconnect with friends and old friends, have deep, meaningful conversations.

Importance of Social Connections in Physical Distancing World

The social world and social networks are powerful to mental health, and it is time to reconnect and restrengthen socially accepting the fact that humans are social beings from birth (Bashi, 2007). Based on the famous concept called Maslow's hierarchy of needs, if one has all the food and drink and has all the security they need, then what they need is a social network of intimate relations and friends. Humans have the desire to connect and connections form a very emotionally insulating feedback loop where they can rely on each other and just knowing each other is there as a way of making them feel better and connected. Viruses can spread when people are physically close. Still, do not spread through social networks unless physically interacting with the social network.

COVID information is spreading everywhere in the world via television, social media, newspapers, family and friends. Prevention recommends closing schools and other gathering places to mitigate pandemics. Closures have significant social and economic consequences, but business closures cause unemployment and financial

harm, which may, in turn, harm health (Gostin and Wiley, 2020). The economic impact of the virus changes the lifestyle. With COVID 19, the threat is chronic and ambiguous, and the isolation is exactly feeding into the threat system resulting in a couple of things (Vellingiri et al., 2020). The most common emotion confronted by everyone is fear (Griskevicius et al., 2009). It makes anxious, panicky and might even push to think, say or do matters that might not be suitable under normal circumstances. The chronic threat is a whole different dynamic making it scarier by affecting the sympathetic nervous system, evoking frustration when nothing can be done to figure it out. The reaction drives to do something to fight against the pandemic and to overcome it is necessary to respect the anxiety system by controlling it through proper mind control.

In the time of COVID, people want to rely on social connections (Marston et al., 2020). One needs to find ways of using things like Facebook and Messenger much more deeply. Virtual meeting platforms like Zoom, FaceTime allows one to see the person's face and hear the voice (Chodosh et al., 2020). So there are the words itself, which is the information, but everything else is the emotions behind that information. These interactions are essential and powerful, and the human voice is vital.

Strategies to Re-energize

Several studies and researches suggest that going to bed and waking up at a specific time, eating one meal at the same time roughly every day and trying to eat nutritious, healthy food will keep one physically strong all the time. Scheduling weekdays in a consistent pattern and necessarily weekends being open and free will energize the way and helps push through the day (Murnane et al., 2016). There are psychological results that suggest that people who have dogs tend to be emotionally more balanced, mentally healthier, and happier (Bower and Cohen, 2014). When further studied, one of the core reasons that dogs tend to live a more structured and predictable day, and they focus the owner into it. This structure helps push through the day and gives it a specific form. Another way is to start the day with a walk and get some fresh air by maintaining the specified distance away from other people. Getting some aerobic activity would be fantastic. Relaxation is a plus point, and the mornings might be the best time to remind oneself what relaxation feels like (Benson

and Proctor, 2011). People who work just as well at home and for whom this virus has not reduced their amount of work, they're almost the easiest because they can continue their work.

Knowledge is power, the more understanding about a particular issue, the less fearful it will be (Gunaratnam, 2003). Distract from negative emotions by listening to music, reading, watching an entertaining programme on television. Engage free time by like painting, gardening or stitching. At instances of anxiety, exercise breathing

slowly for some minutes. Think of something calm and serene and sluggish down your mind. Feeling lonely or unhappy is likewise quite common. Stay connected and interacting with others. Communication can help to connect with family and friends. If the emotion worsens, a person may also experience helpless, hopeless and feel that lifestyle is not always really well worth living. Help and support are essential for persons with mental illness from their families and other caregivers.

Table 1: Strategies to manage mental power during Crisis

Common Public	Exercise regularly, eat well, maintain a healthy diet to maintain a healthy weight and get plenty of sleep. Minimize daily choices and reduce chronic stress and manage chronic conditions Plan for unavoidable known triggers and stay away from toxic people and negative interactions. Cut back on unhealthy social media time but focus on building strong relationships Maintain a treatment plan, continuing prescription medications and reduce the consumption of alcohol and extensive drug usage.
People at high risk (elderly people)	Exercise regularly, practise yoga, eat nutritious food and avoid sugar. Becoming active within one's community and maintain warm relationships. Taking regular walks, exercise, and physical activity is suitable for both the mind and the body via way of means of boosting confidence and lowering the chance of falling. Adult day health is an exceptional resource for seniors seeking to stay active, make new friends.
Families and Children	Stop over scheduling, make proper sleep a priority. Spend more time with family. The higher demanding of the time to own circle of relatives is, the more remarkable to be healthy in exercise. Manage the moods via way of means of letting all emotions be OK; however, not all behaviours. People with smaller social networks, with little intimate relationships, find it greater hard to control social situations.
Health care workers	Fight compassion fatigue, manage one's work-life balance. Talk to dear ones on stress and stay away from known triggers. Make a habit of stepping away from pc and smartphone from time to time. Leadership should try to hold vital infrastructure and produce other aid in place for a group of workers during this time. Mental health and psychosocial concerns should be included in all response activities.
Employers	Resist perfectionism, manage work-life balance. Adopt a positive attitude. Praising personnel who work late and arrive early, or looking forward to them to work from home in the evenings. Healthy eating, exercise and participation in leisure activities are some secure methods to build mental power. Talking approximately stress management, self-care, and mental health in meetings and email communications can reduce the stigma related to mental illness.
Government and Community	National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) is being carried out by the Government of India to aid country governments in imparting mental power and health services in the country. Violence prevention programmes: The primary prevention of violence consists of many things such as children improvement, economic improvement, or community improvement due to the fact all offer an extra activity for youngsters than gang involvement. Youth improvement is a method that enables children to emerge as socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. These are crucial withinside the primary prevention of each violence affecting youngsters and intimate accomplice violence. Experiencing or witnessing violence can contribute to mental fitness problems, especially post-annoying stress disorder. Mental health violence prevention programs understand the intrinsic courting among excellent intellectual health and preventing violence that impacts younger people. Community development programmes: The most vital feature of this programme is the involvement of the people's withinside the system. People need to stay in resilient and wholesome communities. To enhance the requirements of rural life, one has to alternate facilities regarding health need improvement and completed with providing facilities of clinical and health offerings, maternity and infant welfare services, etc. Provision of health offerings is one of the developmental measures taken up with the aid of using Community Development Project.

Mental health encompasses one's psychological, emotional and social well-being. This means it impacts how one feels, thinks and behaves each day. Mental health also contributes to the decision-making process, how one cope with stress and how one relates to others in our lives. The human mind affects one's level of physical energy. Increased willpower and motivation often lead to healthier eating habits, less procrastination and happy life. Figure 1 explains various techniques to manage mental power to overcome the pandemic and beyond.

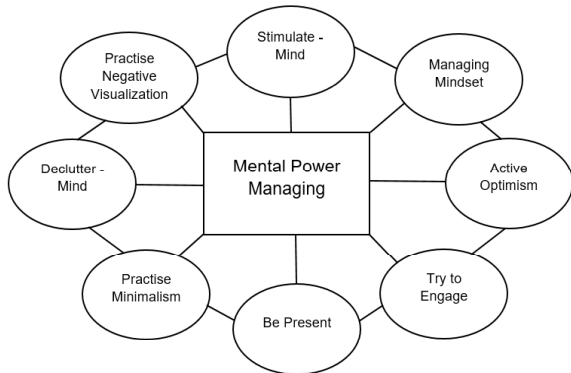


Figure 1: Managing Mental Power

Practising negative visualisation: Negative visualization is a technique that dates back many thousands of years and is one of the most powerful tools. This imagination practice will help to deal with whatever life throws. The visualization exercise will help to foresee bad stuff to train oneself to be able to stay calm and free from emotional suffering. Thinking about negative scenarios does not make one pessimistic but somewhat optimistic. One will appreciate the things they have much more when regularly imagining bad things to happen.

Stimulate mind: Keep mind stimulated, however not overworked. The mental challenge will provide energy. Try getting to know a new ability to stimulate the mind.

Be present: Thinking negatively about the past can motivate anxiety. Thinking approximately destiny can give anxiety. Be within the present moment. Accept the situation and take the pleasant action.

Try to engage: Reconnect with an old friend, invite households for lunch, or ask a neighbour to join for coffee. Join networking, social, or select groups that meet on an everyday basis.

Managing mindset: One talks to oneself more than to anyone else in this world. Use one's words to

change one's situation, not to describe it. When one is feeling down-spirited, don't tell people how you feel, tell them how you want to feel. By controlling what one says and how one says it - using positive words with enthusiasm - It helps to change one's physical and mental state.

Active optimism: Optimism is the tendency to take the most hopeful view of matters. It's the tendency to expect the finest outcome, the belief that good will prevail over evil. The optimist always has the yield to look forward to another day. They are not more resilient than pessimists but able to tolerate adversity, more task-oriented and committed to success. Active optimists act in a way that increases the likelihood that things will indeed turn out well. The powerful source of vibrant optimism appears to be the success itself. The more successes one has, the better they will understand what it takes to be successful — which will generate successes - and the more one will tend to expect success.

Practice minimalism: Minimalism is a simpler and more focused lifestyle. Decluttering is a process that develops as it progresses. The minimalist declutters to simplify life so can focus on the most important things. The benefits of practising minimalism are endless. Minimalism leads to higher productivity, a renewed sense of mindfulness, and allows one to prioritize the things most important to one, such as relationships, travelling, or saving money. Learning to say no, donating or selling what one does not need, saving an emergency fund, simplifying one's spending, cutting back on social media are some ways to practice minimalism.

Declutter mind: Just like cabinets and cupboards, one's reasons to need tidying up from time to time. Getting rid of all non-essential mental baggage is essential to stay focused, motivated and productive. A cluttered mind is unfocused. It tries to move in different directions at once, and the result is that very little gets done. Mental clutter includes all of the following: worrying about the future; ruminating about the past; keeping a mental to-do list; complaints; and so on. Jotting down tasks, keeping them as a journal, letting go of the past, stop multitasking, prioritize and learning to meditate are effective ways to practice decluttering.

Conclusion

It may be stressful to be separated from others if uncovered to COVID-19. Each individual finishing

a duration of home isolation may also sense in a different way approximately it. Emotional reactions may also encompass combined feelings, which includes relief, worry and fear approximately your very own fitness and the health of your cherished ones, pressure from the experience of getting COVID-19 and being monitored via way of means of others, sadness, anger, or frustration due to the fact friends or loved ones have fears of having the disease from you, even though you're cleared to be around others, guilt not being capable of carrying out regular paintings or parenting responsibilities. In contrast, you had COVID-19, fear about getting re-inflamed or ill once more even though you've already had COVID-19 etc. Children can also sense dissatisfied or produce other sturdy feelings if they, or someone they know, has COVID-19, even though they may be now higher and able to be around others again. As the mortality and morbidity facts are accomplishing new peaks each day, isolation and lockdown states are becoming prolonged, leisure possibilities for human beings are lessened, and the economic disaster is constructing in, intellectual health troubles are in all likelihood to develop exponentially. There is a want to apprehend the philosophical views of COVID-19 and possible measures to address the pandemic for his or her powerful management.

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