

CCISF Congress 2021

Seminar Topic: Mental Health and Coping: Moving from Outlook to Uplook

Quote: *Self-care is not being selfish; if you are not well, you cannot care for the well-being of others.*” D.Saugh

Article Brief: Navigating a COVID-19 World and your Mental Health

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As COVID-19 continues to disrupt our lives in so many ways throughout our country and world, an impending mental health crisis is looming. For over a year now the pandemic is raging with flare-ups, spiking numbers and emerging variants or strains of the virus. It was the talk of our political and public health leaders in hope to flatten the curve and considerable progress has been made; however, the nature of a virus is unpredictable.

We have been forced to face a new reality and embrace a new normal; living in a COVID-19 world. Our normal activities severely attenuated, social gatherings capped, shopping online and curbside pick-up, and special occasions/vacations have been postponed, pending or pulverized indefinitely.

Indisputably, our mental health has taken a hit and correspondingly an exacting toll on our physical, emotional, social and spiritual health. Undeniably, a mental health crisis existed prior to COVID-19. It is no surprise that this pandemic has compounded the mental health crisis. In fact, the World Health Organization listed mental health and depression as a global burden of disease in 2020.¹

One study conducted by the University of Phoenix in a survey found that, “the majority of first responders (85 per cent) have experienced symptoms related to mental health issues. It’s not surprising that the vast majority of first responders reported these symptoms, considering 84 percent have experienced a traumatic event on the job. Additionally, a third (34 percent) have received a formal mental health disorder diagnosis, like depression or PTSD.”²

These pandemic problems coupled with previously existing challenges and current conditions that arise from navigating through a COVID-19 world may contribute to the sharp rise in symptoms of mental health, depression and work related stress. So, what do we do? To cope or not to cope, that is the question! We have no choice to go backwards; we must move forward! These are some steps you can take to care for your mental health:

First, build a routine: eat on time, work on time, sleep on time, exercise on time, etc., Create a schedule that allows you to take care of your needs.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression>

² <https://www.blueline.ca/eighty-five-per-cent-of-first-responders-face-mental-health-challenge-university-of-phoenix-5298/>

Second, prioritize: Separate the urgent from the important. Some things can wait! Your health and mental health are a priority. If you do not self-care, then you run the risk of burn out, compassion fatigue and it will affect your health in adverse ways.

Third, make and maintain connections: You have to socialize in some way. We were not meant to live in a bubble, retire in reclusion, or become a hermit. No one is an island in and of themselves. So connect with someone (family or friends) as best by phone, social media, in person (as permissible), over the fence and with your pet!

Fourth, take a break: From the news, from being “zoomed out” and all the conflicting information and noise pollution. Come apart from that or you will fall apart! Take a deep breath! Drown out the din and come to the quiet. Relax, mediate, and focus on you and your well-being.

Fifth, stay calm and carry on: This too will pass. Nothing lasts forever. My Aunt always use to say, “after a storm there is a calm.” The path of peace is never easy, but you have what it takes to hold on, press on, and become resilient. Believe in yourself and love yourself. Why? Because you are worth it!

Finally, if you need help, there are resources on the CCISF website and you can also reach out to us or myself and we will be happy to help you along the journey. Remember, a bend in the road is not the end of the road! Keep on travelling. Your destination is ahead!