Coping with Uncertainty about COVID-19

Presented by ComPsych® Corporation
Agenda

- Discuss uncertainty as it relates to your ability to cope with COVID-19
- Review individual stress reactions and their impact on coping
- Explore coping strategies for anyone experiencing any uncertainty
Question

What are the emotional issues you are experiencing regarding COVID-19?
Perception and Control

• People need to feel in control
• People need to be able to make sense of what is happening in order to predict and control
• Uncertainty can be extremely distressing
• Common emotional reactions are:
  - Fear and Anxiety
  - Mistrust and Suspicion
  - Anger
• These emotions can prompt tunnel vision and impulsive actions
Circle of Control – Where Should We Focus?

Out of our hands

Influence

Control
Question

How does ANY uncertainty impact your mood, behaviors, and overall functioning?
Common Reactions to Uncertainty

Physical Reactions
• Fatigue
• Loss of appetite
• Headaches
• Thirst and dry mouth
• Sweating

Behavioral Reactions
• Emotional outbursts
• Impaired work performance
• Avoidance of others
• Increased family conflicts
• Increased need to keep busy
• Increased sick time
Common Reactions to Uncertainty

**Emotional Reactions**
- Fear, Anxiety
- Feeling of numbness
- Guilt
- Irritability
- Anger
- Grief and sadness
- Helplessness
- Anxiety and depression

**Cognitive Reactions**
- Lack of Concentration
- Confusion
- Intrusive thoughts and images
- Memory problems
- Hyper vigilance
- Poor decision making and problem solving
Acknowledge the Distress

• Distress with uncertainty is normal
• Acknowledge it in yourself and in others you care about
  - “What is happening?”
  - “What are you feeling?”
• Verbalize it out loud, talk about it with others, write about it
• Acknowledging the distress will not resolve it but it allows the opportunity to move forward and make choices
• Exercising choice gives us control and reduces distress
Avoidance and Control Coping

Most individuals combine both avoidance coping and control coping tactics

**Avoidance Coping:**
- Limiting your exposure to that which triggers discomfort
- Taking time off, getting away
- Using distraction
- Not discussing the situation
- Withdrawing socially
- Alcohol use, spending, over-eating
Control Coping

• Asking: “What are my choices?” “What is something I can do?”

• Focusing on accomplishing objectives: “What do I want to accomplish today?” “What is the obstacle?”

• Focusing on the positive: “What am I grateful for?”

• Speaking up on your own behalf – be assertive about your needs

• Finding ways to help others and ask for help
Moving Forward

• Understanding
• Managing as an individual
• Maintaining top quality performance
Helping Our Children Feel Safe

Put the threat in perspective

Avoid exaggerated words or phrases:
- “The worst ever”
- “Nothing helps”
- “Never again”

Talk about measures, like school closings and quarantines, that keep your family safe
- “You will be going back to school”
- “You will be able to go out again”
- “You will be seeing your friends again”

Don’t make false promises about when these things will happen

Give them a hug!

If you are concerned about the psychological well-being of your child, call the EAP
Self-Care

- Be cautious about using avoidance coping such as isolation, withdrawal or relying on alcohol
- Avoid unnecessary exposure to media that might heighten uncertainty without providing additional information
- Maintain your normal routine as it provides stability
- Develop new routines which allow you to relax and decompress
  - Incorporate deep breathing and relaxation time
  - Exercise
  - Sleep at least 7 hours a night
  - Stay in communication with people you enjoy
- Seek professional help as needed
Review

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Additional Help

There are additional resources on www.guidanceresources.com

Your access code is IRS112

Call ComPsych® GuidanceResources®
Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

Call 800-977-7631