



Wellbeing during COVID-19

Adapted from Center for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov

1. **Stay Informed.** Obtain the latest information about the outbreak from credible public health resources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in order to provide accurate information to your clients.
2. **Educate.** During this time, clients may be feeling more stress due to the children being home from school and lack of resources. Providing access to these resources can be beneficial, but only if the resources have the items/support that clients need. Encourage clients to contact the resource prior to traveling to ensure that the items/support needed are available. Clarify education to ensure the client understands the information and has a chance to ask questions.
3. **Correct Misinformation.** In this age of social media, misinformation can spread quickly and easily, causing unnecessary alarm. If clients present you with inaccurate information related to the outbreak, correct their misconceptions and direct them to vetted public health resources.
4. **Limit Media Exposure.** Our cell phones allow us to have 24 hour access to news and social media, which can be a good thing or potentially stressful thing. Research has shown that excess media exposure to coverage of stressful events can result in negative mental health outcomes. Use trusted media outlets to gather the information you need, then turn them off—and advise your clients to do the same.
5. **Anticipate and Counsel About Stress Reactions.**

Emotional distress is common in the context of uncertain and potentially life-threatening situations, such as outbreaks. Our clients may be feeling more stress due to children being home from school, potentially having other's children during the day, and a lack of food/other resources.

 - a. A good first step for mitigating your client's stress is to acknowledge that it exists and help normalize it ("I see that you're stressed, and that's understandable. Many people are feeling this way right now.")
 - b. Teach patients to recognize the signs of distress, including worry, fear, insomnia, difficulty concentrating, interpersonal problems, avoiding certain situations at work or in daily living, unexplained physical symptoms, and increased use of alcohol or tobacco. This will help them become more aware of the state of their mental health and head off distress before it becomes harder to manage.
 - c. Discuss strategies to reduce distress, which can include:
 - Being prepared (e.g., developing a personal/ family preparedness plan for the outbreak).
 - Taking everyday preventive measures (e.g., frequent handwashing).
 - Maintaining a healthy diet and exercise regimen.
 - Talking to loved ones about worries and concerns.
 - Engaging in hobbies and activities you enjoy to improve your mood.
 - d. If a client is experiencing severe emotional distress or has a diagnosable mental illness, refer for specialized mental health care.

6. **Take care of yourself and your loved ones.** Social service providers are not invulnerable to experiencing their own emotional distress during outbreaks, and this distress can be compounded by caring for sick and distressed clients. Make sure your basic needs are met, including: eating, drinking, and sleeping; take a break when you need one; check in with loved ones; practice the strategies to reduce distress listed above; and monitor yourself for stress reactions too. Make efforts to ensure that your office and/or organization has a viable plan to monitor the course of the outbreak and take rapid and appropriate action if needed.

**Source of Credible Public Health Information during Emerging Infectious Disease Outbreaks
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov/>**

