

As our community continues to honor the Governor's stay at home order, it's only natural that the stress and anxiety of disrupting our routines will start to affect our mental wellness.

To counter the emotional burden that is or will be felt by many, I wanted to offer some practical tips to help our community promote positive mental health. Following these practices can help promote a positive attitude and interpersonal relationships.

Connect with Others

Social distancing does not have to equal social isolation.

Reaching out to people is one of the best ways to prevent and reduce anxiety, depression, loneliness, and boredom during social distancing, quarantine, and isolation.

Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. You can use the telephone, email, text messaging, and social media to connect with friends, family, and others, but don't overlook the forgotten art of sending a handwritten letter.

Naturally, if you have the internet, you can utilize that technology to talk "face to face" with friends and loved ones using the various platforms like facetime or skype.



Limit your exposure to news and social media

Most of us don't need to have constant updates about the coronavirus pandemic.

An overabundance of media exposure could be feeding into our coronavirus anxiety. Limit your consumption of what you allow in.



Pick one or two trusted sources that you are going to rely on The Toledo-Lucas County Health Department, Ohio Department of Health, or CDC, and phase out all the others. Plan to check your news sources just a few times a day and only for a limited amount of time.

Limit exposure to social media since other's posts (which may or may not even be remotely close to accurate) can trigger worries and anxiety.

Immersing yourself in the ever-changing stream of information can add stress to an already stressful situation.

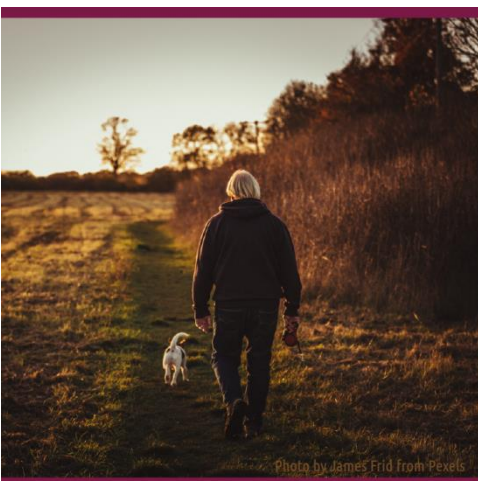
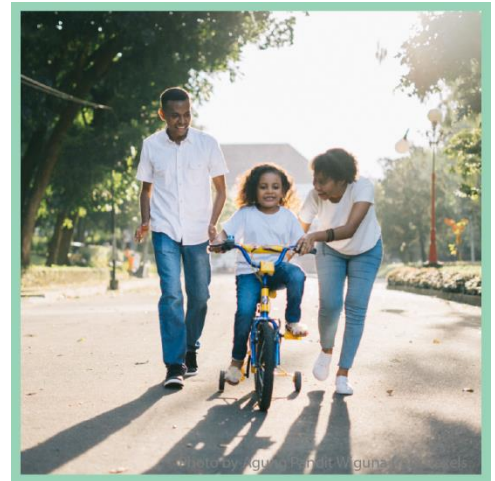
Focus on controlling what you can and letting go of what you can't

Each one of us should take responsibility for our own behaviors and how we respond to the external events around us. Stressing about matters beyond our control will only increase anxiety and agitation. If you find yourself in these situations, stop and ask yourself what control you have and attempt to move behaviors in that direction. It's understandable that letting things go can be difficult, and this leads to the next tip.

Take care of yourself- Mind and Body

Exercise and spending time outdoors (while still practicing social distancing) can be great ways to reduce stress. You don't need any special equipment or technology. Just getting out in the fresh air and the sunlight will likely improve your mood.

Find activities that you enjoy that help put coronavirus and other mounting stressors out of your mind, even if it's just temporary. Do some yard work, start a book you have wanted to read, finish that lingering project, listen to music, organize that junk drawer or do something creative with your kids while their home that will leave lasting memories- Try to take advantage of the time you have.



Consider keeping a journal where you write down things you are grateful for, ideas for the future, reframe negative thoughts into positives- try to keep things in perspective.

Get plenty of rest, try eating healthy and reduce alcohol consumption- We know that excessive alcohol consumption can interfere with a good night's sleep and a balanced diet can boost your immune system - both can also help with mood and can reduce anxiety.

Make time to unwind and find ways to cope and relax your body and mind by doing things that work for you-take deep breaths, stretch, pray, meditate, simply engage in activities you enjoy.

In essence, be kind to others and yourself. I would like to challenge everyone to do something kind for someone else and themselves each day. Remember- we are all in this together- and we will get through this together.

Finally, if you or someone you know needs professional assistance, help is available. Please call the Recovery Helpline at 419-255-3125, or use the Crisis Text Line by texting 4hope to 741-741. Both services are available 24/7, and will help get you connected to a mental health or substance use professional.

In addition to the lines mentioned above, MHR SB has created the Lucas County COVID-19 Emotional Support Line to provide support to Lucas County residents who are experiencing anxiety, loneliness, depression, or other emotional challenges due to the pandemic. The line is staffed by the Wellness Center under the management of Neighborhood Properties Inc. of Toledo. Access the Emotional Support Line by calling 419-442-0580.