

MANAGING DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND ADDICTIONS DURING COVID-19

If you are a mother who is already living with depression, anxiety or an addiction, then the COVID-19 situation could be making you feel worse. You may have a lot more body pains, problems with sleeping, getting angry very easily and having thoughts that upset you.

This is understandable. It's important for you to take extra care of yourself during this time.

Here are a few tips for the many mothers who struggle with depression, anxiety or addictions.

Be kind to yourself

If you find that you are thinking too much or your thoughts are really upsetting you, just notice those thoughts without judging or criticising yourself. Accept that this is a difficult time that you are going through. Say to yourself "This will not last forever".

Counselling

If you are having regular counselling, speak to your counsellor and discuss plans with them. A lot of counsellors are now giving sessions over the phone or online during COVID-19.

If you are not seeing a counsellor, and you are feeling really bad or are struggling with your thoughts, phone a helpline and talk to someone about you feel. At the bottom of this article are some different helplines that can give you counselling over the phone.

If you are a member of a church, mosque or other faith community, you can also try to contact your spiritual leader, or connect with other members of your family or community. If meeting face-to-face is impossible or difficult, try to connect over the phone as often as you can. If you can, see if you can maybe support others this way.

Medication

If you are on medication for depression or anxiety, stay on it. If you are going to run out of medication, find out early if your clinic or pharmacy has made any changes that you need to know about. For example, is there another place where you can collect your medication (a community drop-off point), or can it be delivered? Do NOT stop or reduce your medication without talking with your doctor first.

Get support

If you and your children have to self-isolate, and you are worried about your mental health, is there someone strong and under the age of 60 years that can come and stay with you and keep you company during this time. A parent, a relative, a friend? Otherwise, do you know of anyone else in a similar situation? It could help to have a regular telephone/ WhatsApp chat each day to share the difficulties you both experience and get ideas from each other.

Find online support

There is a lot of mental health help on the internet. You can do a relaxation session on YouTube, you can join an online support group, you can download a meditation app, and many others.

Drugs and alcohol

It can be very tempting to use drugs and alcohol to help calm your fears and thoughts. Be aware of yourself when you feel like doing this. Drugs and alcohol don't help you get control of fears or thoughts and do make you feel much worse afterwards.

If you are feeling very irritable, panicky, shaky, or sweaty, you could be in substance withdrawal. Contact (SANCA – number below), your doctor, or go to your nearest clinic. Explain clearly what you are experiencing; there is no need to feel ashamed or judged because you have been using substances. You are allowed to seek medical help during a lockdown.

Look after yourself

Do what makes you feel calmer and more in control. If that is keeping yourself busy cleaning your house, do that. If it is watching soaps on TV, do that. If it is staying away from social media, do that. If it is listening to music and dancing at home, do that. These are not normal times. Do what you need to do to get through it.

Have a look at our other information for mothers on Managing stress and Dealing with Family violence during COVID-19.

Contacts (keep trying they may be busy)

- South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) www.sadag.org – has many helplines 0800 21 22 23 or 0800 456 789 or 0800 20 5026 and others
- Lifeline general 0861 322 322 and their AIDS Helpline 0800 012 322
- SANCA for Alcohol and Drug problems WhatsApp line 076 535 1701
- Childline 0800 055 555

For more info and helplines visit www.sidebyside.co.za or www.pmhp.za.org