

MANAGING STRESS AS A MOTHER DURING COVID-19

As a mother, you don't just care for yourself, you are also looking after your children, and often other people in the house as well. So, you could be experiencing a lot of stress and worries during COVID-19.

You might be having scary thoughts about getting the virus "What if something happens to my children?" Or "If I get sick, who will look after my children?"

When daycares and schools close, you might have extra stress from having your children at home, and being with each other all day.

A lot of mothers are also worry about how they are going to cope financially: "How am I going to cope if I can't go to work?" Or, "Is my partner or family member going to be able to keep earning?" "How am I going to feed my kids and pay the bills?"

These fears are normal. You are not alone. A lot of people are having these worries. So, what can you do to stay calm and manage your stress during this time?

Acknowledge your feelings

These are some of the feelings, thoughts and other changes that mothers could be experiencing during the coronavirus:

Fear, depression, restlessness, irritation, anger, trouble sleeping, mind racing, helplessness. For those who smoke or drink, or have an addiction, they may find themselves doing more of these things.

These are all normal responses to a really abnormal situation. Recognise and name your feelings. Maybe write them down. You are not 'mad'. Be kind to yourself.

Anxiety and Coronavirus symptoms similar

A lot of mothers are watching themselves and their children very closely for signs that they may be getting sick. Remember that stress and panic have some symptoms which are similar to coronavirus, for example feeling hot and flushed, sweating, being short of breath, having aches and pains. So, if you have these, it doesn't mean for sure that you or your kids have the coronavirus. First try some actions to make the anxiety less, and then see if those symptoms get better.

You need information, but not too much

It is very important to get the right information so you can stay safe and sometime the information changes. All this information can feel too much. So, limit it. Don't have the TV news on ALL the time. Don't be on social media ALL the time. And watch out for rumours and fake news. Rather go to official information sources (National Department of Health WhatsApp line +27 60 012 3456 send "hi" to join) to get the facts.

Distract yourself

We all need distractions during this time to take our minds off the stress. Make a list of things you and your family can do during this time. Watch series, clean your house, cook, play computer games, knit, do puzzles, keep fit at home, plant vegetables, enjoy music – anything that is going to help you pass the time. This is the time that you can do things at home that you don't normally have time to do.

Help others

Helping other people can make you feel better. Get involved in helping your community to cope with COVID-19. Everyone has something to offer. Check in with your friends, family and neighbours and see how you can help each other. For example, take it in turns to go shopping. Check in with an organisation in your community and ask if they need help.

Ask for help

Don't be shy to ask for support. Chat to a friend or relative or a counsellor over the phone. A lot of counselling organisations are offering counselling online and over the phone. Here are some organisations that can listen and support you – see below.

You can do this!

This is a time like nothing else we have ever been through as a society. As a mother, you have already probably coped with a lot of stressful situations. Stress forces us to learn new ways of coping. Stressful situations can sometimes make us stronger, better people. You CAN overcome this!

Have a look at our other information for mothers on Coping with depression, anxiety and addictions 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
- Childline 0800 055 555

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