

03.25.2020

# Teletherapy Appointments Available

To  
Area Medical  
Providers

From  
Nicole Dingwell,  
Director

Re  
Intakes open!

## Managing COVID 19 Stress David Ware, LMSW, ACSW

- **MANAGE UNCERTAINTY:** Look for the things you can change, influence or control, as well as accepting the things that you cannot. Practice “both/and” thinking as much as possible: “this is both frightening and I can deal with it. A friend of mine put it this way: “If I keep myself on track and focused, I consider it a win”.
- **CONTROL YOUR EXPOSURE TO THE MEDIA:** Plan in times each day when you are NOT watching news, sharing news on social media, googling topics related to the news, etc.
- **STAY CONNECTED WITH YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK:** Dedicate part of your media time to contacting friends and family; check in on each other, share stories, hopes and fears. Cautious optimism and gentle humor are HIGHLY adaptive coping mechanisms.
- **BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF AND WITH OTHERS:** Expect that neither you nor anyone else is functioning at their best level. As you notice changes in thinking and emotions, realize that they are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Consider an analogy: You step on a rock, resulting in a mild sprain. You can still walk, but slowly with a limp, and it hurts. COVID 19 is one BIG psychological stone, and we all have an emotional sprain as a result.
- **TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY:** Eat healthy, have a consistent bedtime, get regular physical exercise
- **TAKE CARE OF YOUR MIND:** Develop a list of encouraging and inspirational sayings, stories, etc., that are meaningful to you and/or have helped in the past. Then, use your next episode of anxiety as a cue to call one or more of these to mind.
- **TAKE CARE OF YOUR SPIRIT:** Regularly practice some activity that creates for you a focus on something outside of yourself. Read things that inspire you. Utilize your faith tradition if you have one.
- **AVOID THE “OVERS”:** Be it food, alcohol, or other substances. Practice moderation in order to avoid destructive self-medication that can become a serious problem that lasts longer than the crisis that started it.
- **HELP OTHERS:** Helping others is a powerful reminder that you are NOT helpless and that you can do something that makes a difference. Something as simple as saying thank you to the grocery store cashier, a first responder or a medical professional can truly make a difference. Physical acts of kindness are even more powerful, even with appropriate social distancing.
- **REWORK YOUR STRESS RESPONSE:** A HUGE part of anxiety is from thinking about something dangerous, and stopping at that point, as if all the universe will end at that moment. Instead, imagine feeling a bit frightened, angry, etc. while you are going through it, but instead of these emotions paralyzing you, see them as giving you energy. Then imagine yourself feeling a sense of relief and accomplishment, as you visualize the time after the challenge is over.
- **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** I highly recommend a book, *The Upside of Stress*, by Kelly McGonigal, PhD. You can also view a TED talk of Dr. McGonigal presenting the concepts found in her book.

## GPS Guide to Personal Solutions

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