

How to Protect Your Mental Health During COVID-19 Outbreak

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Define: **Protect** your mental health during COVID-19 outbreak

- **Prevention** generally comes before protection and is meant to **avert the threat before it occurs**.*
- **Protection** is the next step and usually **takes over if prevention fails**.*
- **Prevention activities** :**
 1. Primary Prevention— (for the normal group) intervening before health effects occur, through measures such as vaccinations, altering risky behaviors and banning substances known to be associated with a disease or health condition.
 2. Secondary Prevention— (for the risk group) screening to identify diseases in the earliest stages, before the onset of signs and symptoms.
 3. Tertiary Prevention— (relapse prevention) managing disease post diagnosis to slow or stop disease progression.

• * <https://www.vectorsecurity.com/blog/business-security-the-difference-between-protection-and-prevention>
• **https://www.cdc.gov/pictureofamerica/pdfs/picture_of_america_prevention.pdf

Define : To Protect

- To keep safe; to defend; to guard; to prevent harm coming to.
- Promoting mental health and psychosocial well-being.



- **Psychological wellness** may provide significant protection against the likelihood of major psychological disorder (Cowen, E.,2000).

Define Mental Health



- **Mental health is a state of mental well-being** in which people cope well with the many stresses of life, can realize their potential, can function productively and fruitfully, and are able to contribute to their communities.
- Mental health problems occur throughout the life course and along a continuum from
 - mild, time-limited distress
 - severe mental health conditions with associated psychosocial disabilities

Not to sacrifice Mental Health for Health

Public health emergencies may be a significant risk factor for mental health problems.

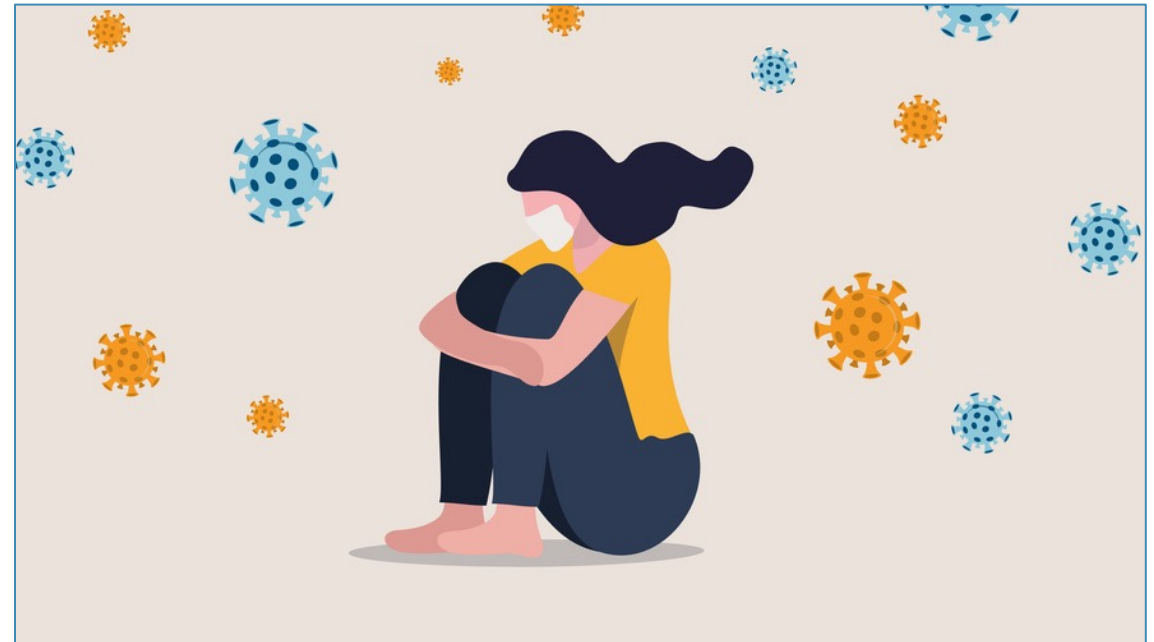
- Mental Health is one of the most neglected area of Health. (WHO, 2021)
- WHO defines health as a state of **complete physical, mental and social well-being** and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
- Enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being.

Related Behavioral Problems during COVID-19

- **Social restrictions** related to the pandemic are likely to have increased alcohol and other substance use as well as online gaming and gambling in different segments of the population.
- **Alcohol and other substance** use can interfere with people's ability and willingness to take precautions against infection.
- In some jurisdictions, increases in alcohol consumption during the pandemic have been associated with increased **domestic violence**.

Common Adversity contributed to Mental Health Problems During COVID-19

- Unemployment and financial instability
- Missed education and lost prospects
- Social isolation
- Intimate partner and family violence
- Fear of life-threatening disease in self or loved ones
- Sudden loss of loved ones



Common Adversity contributed to Mental Health Problems During COVID-19

- Many people with pre-existing mental, neurological and substance use disorders are experiencing **exacerbated symptoms** due to stressors at a time when access to care is disrupted.
- Social isolation, reduced physical activity and reduced intellectual stimulation **increase the risk of cognitive decline** and dementia in older adults.

What can we do
about it?



Mental Health Protective Factors*

Protective factors included :

- 1. Physical activity** (i.e., a health behaviour that helps to build psychological wellbeing)
- 2. Tragic optimism** (optimism in the face of tragedy)
- 3. Gratitude** (a prosocial emotion)
- 4. Social support** (the perception or experience of being loved, cared for, and valued by others)
- 5. Nature connectedness** (physical and psychological connection to nature)

Act to protect wellbeing during the pandemic, over and above the impacts of sociostructural factors including age, gender, and subjective social status.

Positive health behaviours

- **Physical activity**, for improving wellbeing
- Meta-analysis on 157 studies reported a beneficial small effect of physical activity on subjective wellbeing $d = 0.36$, 95% CI [0.301, 0.420] (Buecker et al., 2020).
- Given the extensive barriers to exercise during the pandemic (due to closure of indoor public spaces and restrictions on the number of times allowed to leave the house), researchers have argued that **increasing physical activity levels should be prioritised as a treatment target in psychological therapy** (Diamond and Waite, 2020).

What is “Tragic optimism” ?

- **Tragic optimism** (Wong, 2019a) is a construct defined as **“optimism in the face of tragedy” and in spite of pain, guilt, and death** (the “tragic triad”).
- Emphasis on **hope despite distress** and suffering, and therefore has relevance to the experience of living through the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19.
- Daily optimism during the pandemic is positively associated with support from others (Kleiman et al., 2020).
- Studies have also reported associations between **optimism and multiple health factors**, ranging from small to large effects, including **quality of life** ($r = 0.37$), **mental health** ($r = 0.21$; Auer et al., 2016), and **subjective wellbeing** ($r = 0.54$; Duy and Yildiz, 2019).
- A meta-analysis further demonstrated a relationship between **optimism and coping** (Nes and Segerstrom, 2006), such that optimism is associated with coping strategies to manage stress or emotion ($r = 0.17$).

Protective factors promoting wellbeing*

- **Wellbeing is possible despite much suffering** (Fisher et al., 2020; Tulip et al., 2020; Wilkie et al., 2021).
- Theoretical developments now emphasize that navigating the challenges of life and experiencing **suffering may actually contribute to sustainable wellbeing** (Wong, 2020a) and post-traumatic growth (Chan et al., 2016).
- Well-being is not the absence of illness, disease, or pain and suffering. Rather, it is an acceptance of such challenges as part of the human condition

*Mead, J., et al. (2021)

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/well-being-is-not-the-abs_b_772596



<https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/tragedy-realism-role-optimism-pandemic-recovery>

Optimism : Benefit of Positive attitude

- **Fostering perception and building a positive attitude** towards social distancing policy will encourage behaviors to reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 infection and decrease mental health problems; anxiety and stress.
- Moreover, it may also help to **improve a quality of life**.
- A combination of perception and attitudes were significant predictors of **34.1% increasing practices towards social distancing policy** ($p < .001$). In addition, perception was found to be a significant predictor of **11.8 percent increased quality of life** ($p < .001$).
- Attitudes towards social distancing policy was a significant predictor of **8.6% decreasing anxiety** and of **6.5% decreasing stress** ($p < .001$).

Life orientation of gratitude

- Life orientation of gratitude in which one displays an appreciation generally (McCullough et al., 2002) is **beneficial for wellbeing**.
- A meta-analysis of 158 independent samples on more than 100,000 participants concluded that dispositional gratitude is moderately to strongly correlated with well-being (Portocarrero et al., 2020).
- Higher levels of gratitude early in the pandemic (January – March) predicted **lower psychological harm** ($B = -0.239$) and **higher subjective wellbeing** ($B = 0.584$) among a small sample ($N = 86$) a few months later (April–May) (Bono et al., 2020).
- Wood et al. (2010) highlights that gratitude has been associated with a variety of **adaptive personality traits**, multiple conceptions of wellbeing, **post-traumatic growth** and is inversely associated with poor health behaviours and poor mental health.

Role for community and social ties

- **Social support**, defined as the **perception or experience of being loved, cared for, and valued by others.**
- Social support has been shown to be positively related to wellbeing measures, such as life satisfaction ($r = 0.23$) and personal wellbeing ($r = 0.34$) (Brajša-Žganec et al., 2018).
- **Coping strategies involving social support** have proven beneficial for wellbeing during the pandemic for those living in Germany, with emotional support being associated with increased positive affect ($B = 0.11$) and instrumental support (in the form of advice) being associated with **increased life satisfaction** ($B = 0.06$) (Zacher and Rudolph, 2021).

Nature connectedness

- **“nature connectedness,”** contributes to wellbeing and may even play a role in promoting pro-environmental behaviour (Martin et al., 2020).
- Research across 9 countries (N = 5,218) highlighted that people believed **a view of nature and contact with nature** helped buffer the negative effects of lockdown and increased positive emotion (Pouso et al., 2020).



Resilience as Protective factors



<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/18/health/resilience-relationships-trauma.html>

- re·sil·ience
- the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness
- **Song, et. Al. (2021) Findings:**
- Individuals with high level of mental resilience and active (positive) coping styles would have **lower levels of anxiety and depression** during the outbreak of COVID-19.
- **Suggestion:** in addition to providing information and increasing knowledge about actual risk related to COVID-19, focusing on promoting optimism and active coping styles among the public could serve to mitigate the negative mental health effects of this pandemic.

Effective Protective Strategies

- Psychological wellness provide significant protection against the likelihood of major psychological disorder in the time of the pandemic.
- Not sacrifice mental health for health (Mental health is also Health)
- Engage in physical activity.
- Practice tragic optimism and paying gratitude toward life.
- Create and look for social support.
- Learn to have physical and psychological connection to nature.

Paying gratitude toward life

- Notice the Good Things in Your Life. Tune in to the small everyday details of your life and notice the good things you might sometimes take for granted.
 - Each day, think of 3 things you are grateful for.
- Express Gratitude : Show your appreciation to someone who did something nice.
 - It's about showing your heartfelt appreciation.
 - Tell the people in your life how you feel, what they mean to you.
- Express gratitude by doing a kindness. "pay it forward."

It's all about feeling good and creating a cycle of good.

- **The Little Free Pantry**



<https://www.verywellmind.com/acts-of-kindness-can-aid-well-being-study-shows-5081545>

<https://communityimpact.com/local-news/dallas-fort-worth/mckinney/news/2016/09/28/little-free-pantry-donation-pickup-site-opens-outside-mckinneys-hugs-cafe/>

Strong Mind Strong Body



<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/02/14/well/mind/14compassion-quiz.html>

- Be Positive
- Mind and Body interconnected
- Be Happy to be Healthy
- Practice self-compassion (Forgive yourself and acknowledge that you're doing your best in a really tough situation)*.
- **we always have a choice in how we relate to pain and suffering**
- Having a positive outlook enables you to cope better with stressful situations, which reduces the harmful health effects of stress on your body**.

*mhanational.org/negative-self-talk-during-covid-19

**<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950>

Final Thought



https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/2782.Viktor_E_Frankl

**“Between stimulus and response there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”**

Viktor E. Frankl, M.D., Ph.D

Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist as well as a Holocaust survivor.

Thank you

*Wherever you go,
no matter what the
weather, always bring
your own sunshine.*

~Anthony J. D'Angelo



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