

Covid, Covid, Covid

Are you tired and overwhelmed by all the news about Covid-19? Are you tired of hearing about it 24-7? Are you tired of being told to stay home, wear a mask, and forego all the things that used to be part of a typical day? I know I am.

I'm tired of having to make a battle plan every time I go somewhere. Car keys? Check. Driver's license? (I try not to carry a pocketbook anymore unless I have to; less to contaminate) Check. Money or credit card? Check. Face mask? Check. Hand sanitizer? Check.

I'm frustrated at not being able to see family and friends as frequently as I did BC (before Covid!). I'm frustrated at being afraid to hug and kiss them as freely as I once did.

I'm tired of being fearful whenever I enter a store because I don't know if everyone else will be wearing a mask.....or not. Or if someone who is asymptomatic (infected with Covid-19 but with absolutely no symptoms of the disease, as it is estimated 35% of the population is) has touched any surface in the store and then I touch it after them.

I am tired of being angry with those people who I think are flaunting their resistance to rules by not adhering to the health guidelines: wearing a mask when inside a public space, and thereby putting everyone else at risk.

I am tired & frustrated at feeling as if I have to live in a bubble. And I'm really miffed at having had to cancel this fall's travel plans! L When is life going to get back to "normal"?!

I try to keep things in perspective, but am not always successful at doing so. I think all these feelings just make me human. But I still don't like it!

I am reading more about mental health issues as the pandemic drags on. Many people have lost jobs, or had work hours severely curtailed, thereby creating a very real economic issue for them.

There is fear among those whose jobs have been deemed "essential". Fear about constant exposure to the virus. Fear about taking the virus home to their family. Fear because, as an essential employee, they have to report to work, but no longer have available childcare.

People in communal care facilities of one sort or another have become isolated because visitors are no longer allowed, or again, at the least, severely curtailed.

There has been a wholesale disruption of what used to be normal routines for everyone, everywhere. And the future has now become a totally unknown entity.

It is common for humans to experience anger, fear, depression, and increased stress under these kinds of circumstances. It is also common for those feelings to ebb and flow, almost like a roller coaster ride. We are not static beings; our moods are subject to change depending upon numerous internal and external forces. While we may be able to make adjustments ("going with the flow") under "normal" circumstances, during times of increased and constant stress, such as caused by the current pandemic, those adjustments may become more difficult for us. What can we humans do to help us get through these mentally difficult times?

Make the attempt to maintain a consistent daily schedule. Wake up at the same time each morning; go to bed around the same hour every night. Try to get eight (8) hours of sleep. (Our bodies do a lot of physically demanding repair work during sleep.) Turn off electronic devices at

least 30 minutes before hitting the pillow. (There have been numerous studies showing that the “blue light” emitted by today’s electronic devices disrupts our ability to sleep.) Eat meals at the same time.

To quote a song title from Olivia Newton-John, get “Physical”. Aerobic (that which requires oxygen) exercise has proven to reduce anxiety and depression. It has been posited that the exercise-induced increase in blood circulation influences a number of different regions of the brain which control motivation and mood, fear as a response to stress, and memory formation. Thirty (30) minutes of moderately intense activity (brisk walking, biking, swimming, jogging) a day, three (3) times a week, is sufficient to provide these health benefits. It is believed that those 30 minutes can be broken into three (3) ten (10) minute increments, spaced throughout the day, & still be beneficial.

Limit social media & news access. Remember the saying, “If it wasn’t for bad luck I’d have no luck at all”? Well, in this case, I think that can be changed to, “If it wasn’t for bad news there’d be no news at all”. I’ve taken to powering down my devices around 9:00 PM. I also try to remain aware of the amount of time I spend on them during the day. About 2 weeks ago I had the “opportunity” to be somewhere where I was without internet access for a day and a half. (OMG!) I was totally at peace for those 36 hours. It was truly amazing! J

Use those electronic devices to stay as socially connected to family & friends as possible. FaceTime, ZOOM, and even the plain old-fashioned phone call will help here. The new ministry, Calls of Caring and Compassion, that the UPG instituted is an awesome way to stay in touch with our church family. I’ve stolen that idea and make calls to family members, as well as a number of friends, to check in with them periodically to make sure they are okay and ask if there is anything they need.

Try the ages old practices of yoga and meditation. There are also apps available for breathing exercises & mindfulness that can be helpful.

If you find yourself in a really dark place with no seeming way out, please, please, please seek the help of a qualified mental health expert. Doing so does not say one is “crazy” or incapable of dealing with the lemons being tossed in the way. It says one is human and in need of help to combat the increased level of stress at a given time. I’m going to use a quote from “Crocodile Dundee”, “I guess we could all use more mates.” Make the mental health providers your “mates” to help get through these difficult times.

Information from:

- NIH (National Institute of Health)

I want to especially thank the UPG’s very own Tom Sarver. I felt I was way out of my league speaking to mental health concerns. Tom graciously responded to my request for assistance by suggesting issues and options to include in this Covid offering.

From Parish Nurse, Donna Musselman