



## THE NAIROBI HOSPITAL

REF: TNH/COVID19/MF/23/03/2020

### COVID-19: MANAGING FEAR

During these uncertain and trying time it's normal for people to experience a wide range of thoughts, feelings and reactions including:

- Feeling stressed or overwhelmed
- Anxiety, worry, or fear
- Racing thoughts
- Sadness, tearfulness, loss of interest in usual enjoyable activities
- Physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate, stomach upset, fatigue, or other uncomfortable sensations
- Frustration, irritability, or anger
- Restlessness or agitation
- Feeling helpless
- Difficulty concentrating or sleeping
- Feeling disconnected from others
- Apprehension about going to public spaces
- Trouble relaxing

These experiences are all understandable in the face of this significant challenge.

#### Strategies to Cope with Stress, Anxiety or Distress

When many things feel uncertain or out of our control, one of the most effective ways we can manage stress and anxiety is to focus on the actions that are in our control. Here are some ways you can take intentional steps to look after your physical and emotional wellbeing during this challenging time:

**1. Learn how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.**

The Ministry of Health has recommended important actions we can all take to protect against infection and prevent the virus from spreading including practising good hygiene, self-isolation, and social (physical) distancing. The hospitals infection and prevention control team (IPC) is available for education, training and further clarification.

**2. Acknowledge your feelings.**

Whatever you are feeling right now, know that it's okay to feel that way. Allow yourself time to notice and express what you're feeling. This could be through journaling, talking



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with others, or channelling your emotions into something creative (e.g., drawing, painting, poetry, music).

### 3. **Maintain your day-to-day activities and a routine as much as possible.**

Having a healthy routine can have a positive impact on your thoughts and feelings. Go back to basics: eating healthy meals, physical exercise (e.g., walking, stretching, running, cycling), getting enough sleep, and doing things you enjoy. Even if you're in self-quarantine, or working from home, there are many ways to develop new routines and stay healthy.

### 4. **Keep learning and maintaining your study (Be creative and keep your mind engaged)**

- Read a book
- Listen to a podcast (your favourite music, documentary, movie)
- Try out a new hobby or skill (e.g., cook a new recipe, play an instrument, learn a language, learn how to sew, gardening).

### 5. **Stay connected.**

Spending time with supportive family and friends can bring a sense of comfort and stability. Talking through our concerns, thoughts, and feelings with others can also help us find helpful ways of thinking about or dealing with a stressful situation.

Remember that physical distancing does not need to mean social disconnection. There are many ways we can use technology to stay connected, and both give and receive support (remotely). You could:

- Call, text, or video-chat with friends and family
- Share quick and easy recipes
- Start a virtual book or movie club
- Schedule a workout together over video chat
- Join an online group or peer forum.

### 6. **Contribute.**

Showing care towards friends, family, or vulnerable people in our community can be all the more important during times like this. It can foster a sense of hope, purpose, and meaning. Some ideas can be to:

- Send someone you care about a message of encouragement or affirmation
- Cook, pack and deliver a meal to someone in your neighbourhood
- Donate to a cause.



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### 7. **Keep things in perspective.**

In a situation that's uncertain, it's natural to have many 'what if?' questions in our minds. In the absence of information, our anxious mind will often fill in the blanks with worst case scenarios, which can leave us feeling overwhelmed, helpless, or vulnerable. Here are some questions you can ask yourself to shift your thinking from catastrophizing to a more helpful mind-set:

- What are the things within my control?
- Am I overestimating the likelihood of the worst-case scenario?
- What strategies have helped me cope with challenging situations in the past that will serve me well during this time?
- What is a small helpful or positive action that I can take now?

### 8. **Seek accurate information.**

Finding credible sources, you can trust is important to avoid the fear and panic that can be caused by misinformation. Avoid reading the forwards sent to social media groups from sources that are not credible. Follow sources like the Ministry of Health, World Health Organization or Centre of Disease Control for up-to-date fact sheets.

### 9. **Set limits around news and social media.**

It's understandable to want to keep informed and prepared. At the same time, constantly reading, watching, or listening to upsetting media coverage can unnecessarily intensify worry and agitation. When you get the urge to check updates, see if you can pause, notice the urge, delay acting on the urge, and let it pass without judgement. Schedule a specific time to check in with the news instead. It's also okay to take breaks from conversations with others about COVID-19 and suggest talking about other topics.

### 10. **Keep hope alive.**

It's important to remember you can only do what is in your control. Take care of your spiritual health. Connect with God and your spiritual family.

For additional support or counselling, please contact the Psychosocial department on **0730666024/6031** or extension **6024/6031**