

YOUR THOUGHTS

- Trouble concentrating or remembering things
- Difficulty with making decisions
- Frequent replaying of the events and circumstances of the pandemic in your mind
- Recurring dreams or nightmares about the pandemic and its impact
- Questioning of your spiritual or religious beliefs

YOUR HEALTH

As you endure long-term stress, your health can be adversely affected. It is common for people to have headaches, stomach or intestinal problems, colds, infections, and allergies more frequently. In addition, preexisting medical conditions such as heart problems and high blood pressure may be exacerbated by the prolonged stress.


What can I expect?

There are many concerns, adjustments, and ordeals that follow the experience of a disaster, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally, within a short time there is the reality of financial setbacks and the loss of employment, property, and home evictions. The endless adjustments that you and your family must make will put additional stress on your relationships and daily living. You may also grow physically and mentally weary from the sense of isolation that can result from social distancing. All of these factors can hinder your ability to move forward. In the aftermath of COVID-19, it is important to remember that it will take time to adjust, heal and recover from the emotional effects of the pandemic.

However, with the passing of time, your efforts to cope will begin to reduce the intensity and duration of these reactions and behaviors.

How to cope and what works . . .

- Talk to others about how you are feeling. It is important to talk about your experiences. You need to express sadness, grief, anger, and fears over what has happened and what you face. Don't overwork yourself. Take time to be with your family. Take time for recreation, relaxation, or a favorite hobby.
- Do not let yourself feel too isolated. Seek out and maintain connections, using social distancing and safe practices; Virtually connect with your community, friends, relatives, neighbors, coworkers, using technology and social media such as smart phones, facetime, zoom, etc. Talk about your experiences with them.
- Pay close attention to your physical health, as prolonged stress takes its toll on your body. Maintain a good diet and make sure you are getting enough sleep. It is also helpful to be physically active or exercise.
- Upsetting times can cause some people to use alcohol or drugs to cope with the stress. It does not help in the long run and will likely cause other problems.

If stress, anxiety, depression, or physical
 , or interfere with
should consult a
th professional, or
listed in this

The COACH Program

(COVID-19 Assistance for Community Health) Counselors are here to connect you with services, or listen and offer support if you want to talk with someone about how this pandemic is affecting you.

Visit ctstronger.org/COACH
Or call 211 Infoline and ask for
the COACH Program in your area

Recovering from the Emotional Aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Older Adults

The COVID-19 Pandemic struck with little or no warning. Almost overnight the routine and structure of our lives, and the lives of older adults in particular, forever changed. No one is untouched by the virus and its affects.

For many a disaster continues as a very real presence even long after it has passed. Feelings of sadness, depression, frustration, anger, and anxiety are common. It is not unusual for these feelings to last for many months. Learning to recognize the normal reactions and emotions that occur can help you better understand these feelings and become more comfortable and effective in coping with them.

As an older adult, you probably have many of these reactions and feelings; however, some may be different or intensified. It is important to ask for support when you need it.

The following information explains the range of feelings and behaviors you can expect and how you, your friends, and neighbors can best help yourselves and each other during this time of recovery. Suggestions for coping with the aftermath are offered throughout this brochure.

Why do I feel the way I do?

It is very common for people to experience a wide range of emotional reactions to an event such as a global pandemic. These reactions are experienced through thoughts, feelings, and actions, and are often very upsetting to you and those around you.

However, it is extremely important to remember that they are NORMAL REACTIONS TO AN ABNORMAL EVENT. You have been through an exceptionally stressful situation and these emotional reactions may continue for many months following the pandemic.

Common Feelings

Current losses can trigger memories or feelings associated with prior losses. During or following the COVID-19 pandemic you may experience the following:

- Fear of dependency or lack of self-sufficiency
- Worry about limited financial resources
- Sadness and grief following the loss of loved ones and friends from COVID-19
- Fear of a decline in health and mobility
- Overwhelming fear of contracting COVID-19
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation

Common Reactions

- Withdrawing and/or isolating yourself from family and friends
- Concealing the full extent of COVID's impact
- No longer caring to reach out or connect with others

- Experiencing confusion or disorientation
- Having a decline in physical health
- Not making use of available resources

Things to look for . . .

YOUR BEHAVIORS

- Having problems falling or staying asleep
- Isolating yourself or withdrawing from others
- Keeping excessively busy and preoccupied to avoid the unpleasant effects of COVID-19
- Becoming obsessed with safety and not contracting the virus
- Experiencing more conflicts or tension with family members or other people/more anger
- Crying easily or becoming tearful for no apparent reason
- Experiencing an increase or decrease in your normal appetite
- Drinking alcoholic beverages more

YOUR FEELINGS

- "Just "not yourself," out of balance, or easily upset
- Loss of interest in everyday activities
- A sense of despair, hopelessness, or emptiness about the future
- Anxiety or fear, especially when things remind you of COVID-19
- Irritability, shortness of temper, or anger and resentment
- Depression, sadness, or feeling down much of the time