

**Dr. Greenstone's Mental Health
Guidance for Dealing with The
Pandemic Crisis**

What You Can Do and What You Can Do Now!

2020 and Beyond

James L. Greenstone, Ed.D., J.D., DABECI
Deputy Sheriff, Tarrant County Sheriff's Office
Professor, Disaster and Emergency Management
Nova Southeastern University
College of Osteopathic Medicine
222 W. 4th St., Suite 212, Fort Worth, TX 76102
(817) 882-9415 (dr.james.greenstone@gmail.com)



Dealing with The Pandemic Crisis

What can you do to manage during these difficult times?

1. Make Yourself a Routine and Keep It.
 - Just because you are at home or not where you are accustomed to being, doesn't mean you can't have a routine. Routines promote time management and can actually help to lower anxiety and worry.
2. Exercise at your own pace.
 - Staying physically active will help decrease depression and anxiety.
 - Find a routine for you that matches your needs, abilities and physical condition.
3. Invest in online Mental Health apps such as Moodpath, Daylio Journal, Youper... etc.
4. Spend time doing an activity you love.
5. Stay involved in your community.
 - Utilize video chat rather than texting. Oovoo, Skype, Facetime, Zoom, and other apps can be used for this.
6. Discuss uncomfortable or unusual feelings that you might have with a peer counselor or mental health professional.
7. Be observant. Notice changes in those closest to you. Notice those with whom you work and about whom you care. If you notice a change in attitude, behavior, feelings, any changes at all regardless of how minor, quietly inquire and be willing to listen. If you are approached for similar reasons, avoid being defensive and realize that they must care about you. Otherwise they would not have bothered. You cannot be everyone's shrink. But you can show that you care and allow them to respond if they would like to. Sometimes this helps more than you may think. And, this is especially true in these times. Personal detection of small issues, yours and mine, while they are small may help to prevent these same issues from escalating.

On the Job

1. Prepare, prepare, prepare. Uncertain times require preparation before, during and after the crisis.
2. Start preparing for the next crisis situation now.
3. Thoroughly understand the policies promulgated by your department or organization. Follow them.
4. Practice social distancing and limit direct contact as possible. Use the 6-foot rule whenever possible.

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5. Obtain and properly use authorized personal protective equipment.
 6. Use good hygiene techniques for yourself and encourage them for others on the job and even others with whom you may come into contact.
 7. Take care of yourself first and foremost. If you get sick, get medical attention. No martyrs needed here.
 8. Pay attention to the others with whom you work. Be sensitive to their needs and accept their sensitivity to yours.
 9. If you need to have someone showing symptoms transported to a medical facility, have specially trained EMS personnel do the assessment and transportation.
 10. Always pay attention to what is going on around you in your immediate vicinity in order to avoid additional risks.
 11. Be sure to clean and to disinfect your duty equipment using designated sprays or wipes.
 12. Properly dispose of any used personal protective equipment (PPE) utilized.
 13. Use designated procedures for laundering clothing. Avoid shaking your clothes.
 14. Even though on-the-job risk is considered to be low for COVID-19, follow the guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
 15. Begin assembling personal and professional gear that you might need for response to future disaster and crisis situations. Preparation should be an ongoing process rather than playing “catch-up” after the disaster occurs.

At Home

1. Make a to-do list for each day.
 - These need to be realistic and attainable goals for the day of work.
2. Time segment projects and tasks. Schedule and stick to your schedule as much as possible.
3. Take small breaks throughout your day. Do something different during these breaks. The break itself may not be enough. Doing something different during the break can bring the needed relief.
4. Create realistic due dates for yourself and stick to them as much as possible.
5. Get your news from the most reliable sources that are available. Check out at least two sources when trying to glean the facts. Trust, then verify.

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6. Do not overwhelm yourself with too much news and reports all of the time. Limit your exposure and get on with other things in your life and the life of your family.
 7. Take a walk on a regular basis. If you cannot get outside, walk inside. If you can get outside and walk for at least a little while, the benefits will be there.
 8. Be careful about excesses of any kind. Too much news, too much TV, too much coffee, etc., should be avoided. Find other activities that need doing and occupy yourself doing them and try to have fun with them at the same time. What about art, music, writing, and anything else that gives you a sense of satisfaction. When faced with difficulties, it is often hard to justify such behaviors to ourselves. Actually, doing so may help you to be more effective in the other, more tedious things that you have to do.
 9. Find a way to talk to other people. Skype, Facebook, facetime, telephone, etc. Find what works for you. Even casual connections help you to feel involved and vital. You affect others; they will affect you.
 10. If you have a little extra time, see about learning a new skill.
 11. Under the circumstances, the establishment of new routines may be necessary. Make them realistic and where children are concerned, child friendly. Routines should be predictable and structured and as such will help to deal with the uncertainties and even the stress surrounding the current crisis situation.
 12. Sleep on a regular basis at established times. Turn off the television and other inputs and allow yourself restful sleep on a regular basis.
 13. If you have routine trouble getting restful sleep, consult your doctor.
 14. Remember that sometimes sleep patterns are disturbed by stress, stressful situations and changes in routine. As you adjust to both internal and external changes you may find that your sleep pattern will also adjust and become more restful and rejuvenating.
 15. Look for ways to do fun things by yourself, with your significant other and with other family members.

Animals

If you have concerns about your animals there are resources available to you. These include:

CDC: Animals and Coronavirus Disease 2019-
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/animals.html>

American Veterinary Medical Association: www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19

Texas Veterinary Medical Association:
<https://www.tvma.org/Resources/COVID-19-Resources>

CHECK OUT ONLINE AND TELEPHONIC MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES THAT ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH YOUR LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OR LOCAL PROVIDER.

If you are in crisis or have suicidal thoughts, please call the 24-hour crisis hotline at (817) 335-3022 or 800-273-8255. You can also text "CONNECT" to 741741 anytime to reach trained, caring volunteers at the National Crisis Text Line.

Preparation for this time and the next.

1. Develop a personal and family plan to obtain what you need now and will likely need in the future to survive this disaster situation and those that we all know will occur in the future.
2. Preparation at all levels, food, water, necessities, toiletries, etc. should be an on-going, year-round process in order to avoid the panic buying or hoarding that often occurs during man-made or natural crises.
3. Develop a mind-set of survival rather than adopting the attitudes of most that it probably won't happen to me, it won't be that bad, or even if it is that bad, there is nothing that I can do about it anyway. That is simply not true even though a prevalent way of thinking.
4. Put together a "go-bag." Some may be available commercially even though people tend not to buy them. So, put together your own. Include those things that you may need for yourself and for those close to you in the event of a disaster. Plan both for incidents that require you to leave your normal residence as well as those that may require you to shelter-in-place. Plan a bag for each member of your family and keep it stocked and up-to-date. For specific guidance, see Greenstone's Elements of Disaster Psychology, and Emotional First Aid: A Field Guide to Crisis Intervention and Psychological Survival.

"You First"

Take care of yourself first, then take care of the others around you. If you have what you need, you will be better able to provide for what your loved ones and others need. Encourage those around you to do the same. Take responsibility for yourself.

Understanding Crisis and Crisis Intervention / Emotional First Aid

“The fate of the emotionally wounded rests in the hands of the one who does the initial crisis intervention”

Crisis is in the eye of the beholder. Crisis involves stress; unusual stress that renders the sufferer unable to cope with their life as they usually would. A disaster exists when the resources available to address the emergency are less than those needed to address the needs of the victims and the overall situation. A disaster can be of any size. The issue is whether or not the needs of those affected by the disaster can be met with the resources available at that time. Overwhelmed resources usually equals disaster as differentiated from an emergency in which adequate resources can be utilized to resolve or to manage the needs of those affected. Here, we are about crisis and about the possibility of overwhelmed resources both personal and public. The greater and more personal the perceived threat, the greater the likelihood for crisis to occur.

The crisis trilogy presents a way of understanding the causation in crisis situations. The trilogy involves events occurring that are (1) sudden in onset, (2) unexpected by the victim or their significant others, and (3) appear to be arbitrary in nature. All three are major sources of unusual stress. Because crisis is in the eye of the beholder,

what is unusual stress for one may not be for someone else. Take a look at the Crisis Cube, (Greenstone, 2008, 2015) to help in understanding this concept. Level of functioning overall, presence or absence of functional emotional problems, experience handling stress and similar daily-life behaviors can be a determiner of a person's susceptibility to experiencing crisis in their life at a particular time. No one is immune to crisis. Enough stress at the wrong time and in the particular person at that time can mean crisis even for the strongest of us. This includes responders and crisis interveners as well. Sherif's (1948, 1956) principles described are very helpful in understanding this and in preparing for such eventualities.

Here is some information about COVID-19 from Johns Hopkins Hospital that you may find helpful.

- The virus is not a living organism, but a protein molecule (DNA) covered by a protective layer of lipid (fat), which, when absorbed by the cells of the ocular, nasal or buccal mucosa, changes its genetic code (mutation) and converts it into an aggressor, which multiplies.
- Since the virus is not a living organism but a protein molecule, it is not killed, but decays on its own. The disintegration time depends on the temperature, humidity and type of material where it resides.
- The virus is very fragile; the only thing that protects it is a thin outer layer of fat. That is why any soap or detergent is the best remedy, because the foam cuts through the fat. This is why you rubbing for 20 seconds or more and producing foam helps break down the virus.
- Heat melts the fatty protective layer. This this is why it is good to use water above 77 degrees fahrenheit when washing hands, clothes and other things that can have contact with your skin. In addition, hot water makes more foam, which makes washing of your hands more useful in dissolving the virus.
- Alcohol or any mixture with alcohol over 65% dissolves the fatty protection.
- Any mixture of one part bleach and five parts water directly dissolves the protein, which breaks down the virus from the inside.
- Peroxide dissolves the protein, but you have to use it pure, which can irritate your skin.
- Bactericide and antibiotics do not kill the virus. The virus is not a living organism like bacteria; therefore, antibodies cannot kill what is not alive.
- Never shake used or unused clothing, sheets or cloth. While it is glued to a porous surface, it is inert and disintegrates in 3 hours (fabric), 4 hours (copper and wood), 24 hours (cardboard), 42 hours (metal) and 72 hours (plastic). But if you shake cloth that contains the virus or use a feather duster, the virus molecules float in the air for up to three hours and can lodge in your nose.
- The virus molecules remain very stable in external cold or artificial cold (e.g., air conditioners in houses or cars).

- COVID-19 needs moisture and darkness to stay stable, Therefore, dehumidified, dry, warm and bright environments will degrade it faster.
- UV light on any object where COVID-19 resides breaks it down.
- The virus cannot go through healthy skin.
- Vinegar is not useful because it does not break down the COVID-19's protective layer of fat.
- Most spirits (e.g., Vodka) do not break down the protective layer. Vodka is usually 40% alcohol, and 65% is needed to break down the protective layer.
- The more confined the space, the more concentrated the virus. The more open or naturally ventilated, the less the virus is concentrated.
- You have to wash your hands before and after touching mucosa, food, locks, knobs, switches, remote control, cell phone, watches, computers, desks, TV, etc.
- Moisturize dry hands that can result from increased washing because the molecules can hide in the micro skin cracks. The thicker the moisturizer, the better.
- Keep your nails short so that the virus does not imbed itself under your nails.

References and Helpful Information

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Other material in this report is from the Mental Health Association. Helpful information has been gleaned from various sources in order to provide the best possible during these times of crisis. Every attempt will be made to cite external information given. Other contributors of information contained herein include: Carrie Steiner, PsyD., First Responders Wellness Center in Chicago; Johns Hopkins Hospital; American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress; David Belmonte, Content developer for Lexipol; Suzanne Bertisch, M.D., M.P.H.

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