



# Anxiety, Depression and COVID-19: Supporting Yourself and Others

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Date: January 13, 2021

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## EFAP Information

English: 1.800.663.1142

French: 1.866.398.9505

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## Overview

- COVID-19
- Definitions of anxiety and depression
- Prevalence
- Signs and symptoms
- Strategies for managing anxiety and depression
- Resources



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## Objectives

1. Increase awareness of anxiety and depression and understand why it is important to be able to recognize symptoms
2. Learn ways to tell if you or someone you know suffers from anxiety or depression
3. Learn strategies to manage anxiety and depression and increase well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

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## COVID-19 and Mental Health

- This public health crisis can take a mental toll on people, especially those struggling with anxiety, depression and other conditions
- Stress, fear, worry and anxiety are normal reactions to the danger, threat and uncertainty around this pandemic
- These reactions are being exacerbated by many sudden lifestyle changes and disruptions



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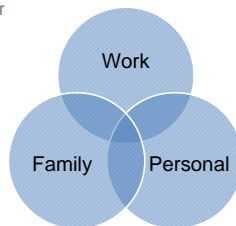
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## COVID-19

### CHANGE:

- Increased/decreased workload and/or new responsibilities
- Worry over the well-being of family and friends
- Worry over your own well-being
- Social isolation
- Absence or limits to recreation/hobby activities (missed vacations, closed movie theatres)
- Childcare issues
- Financial hardship
- Job insecurity



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## What is Anxiety?

- A universal human experience
- A normal emotional reaction to perceived danger
- Alarm system
  - Helps prepare us for danger and react to it
- Adaptive response when danger is real

"... there are times when world events bring forward even greater uncertainty in daily life, which in turn can make us even more anxious than usual. The coronavirus outbreak is one of these times for many people." (Anxiety Canada, March 2020)

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## What is Depression?

- A common reaction to prolonged stress or loss
- Defining features:
  - Depressed mood (down, blue or depressed)
  - Loss of interest or pleasure



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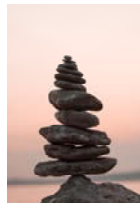
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## Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression

- **Anxiety**
  - Lifetime: 25%
  - 12-month: 12%
- **Depression**
  - Lifetime: 11.3%
  - 12-month: 4.7%
- **Anxiety and depressive disorders frequently co-occur**



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## What are some signs and symptoms of anxiety?

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## Anxiety: Signs and Symptoms

- **Physical**
  - ↑ heart rate, tension, chest tightness, difficulty breathing, dizziness, upset stomach, sweating etc.
- **Cognitive**
  - Worry (“what if ...”), catastrophic thoughts, distressing images or recollections of past experiences, impaired concentration
- **Behavioural**
  - Avoidance, escape, safety behaviors (“subtle avoidance”)
- **Emotions**
  - Anxiety, fear
  - Associated emotions: irritability, sadness, shame

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## Types of Anxiety Disorders

- Panic Disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Specific Phobia (e.g., flying, heights, animals)
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder\*
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder\*
- Adjustment Disorder\*

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## What are some signs and symptoms of depression?

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## Depression: Signs and Symptoms

- **Physical**
  - Fatigue/loss of energy, sluggishness, difficulty sleeping, restlessness, appetite/weight change
- **Cognitive**
  - Feeling worthless, hopelessness/pessimism, impaired concentration, indecisiveness, guilt, thoughts of death or suicide
- **Behavioural**
  - Withdrawal, avoidance, isolation
- **Emotions**
  - Sadness, depressed mood, low positive emotions
  - Associated emotions: anger, irritability, shame, guilt

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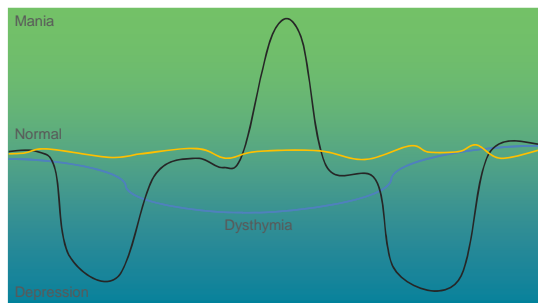
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## Types of Depressive Disorders



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## Where is the Line?

### How do you distinguish between...

- Normal responses to stress vs. an anxiety disorder?
- Presentation jitters vs. an anxiety disorder?
- The blues vs/ major depression?



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## Where is the Line?

Indicator	Normal	Disorder
Frequency	Occasional to rare	Often
Duration	Short term (a few days)	Longer term (depression >2 weeks; anxiety > several months)
Pervasiveness	Only in 1 or 2 situations	Everywhere
Intensity	Mild	Strong
Impact on daily functioning	Little impact	Moderate or greater impact

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## COVID-19: Managing Anxiety and Worry

Anxiety Canada (2020) suggests the following for managing anxiety and worry during these uncertain times:

1. Self-compassion
2. Limit news/unplug from social media
3. Protect yourself



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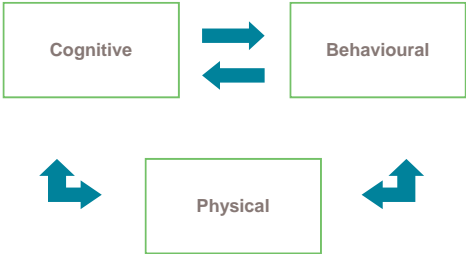
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 **Basic Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Model**



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 **Healthy Thinking**

- **Create distance from thoughts**
  - Stop, observe, and describe
- **Be a scientist**
  - Treat thoughts as hypotheses, not foregone conclusions
  - Collect evidence; be objective
- **Generate alternative explanations**
  - Thoughts based on evidence
- **Develop helpful coping thoughts**
  - What would you say to a friend?
  - How much will this matter in XX months/years?

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 **Other Research Supported Strategies**

- **Counselling:** EFAP, community resources
- **Social support:** family, friends, support groups
- **Self-care:** regular sleep, exercise and eating habits
- **Stress reduction & mindfulness**
- **Medical Doctor:** referrals, medication

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## Guided Breathing Exercise



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## Summary

- Anxiety and depressive disorders are common and can be disabling
- It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms
- Challenging circumstances, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, can be especially triggering
- Many people recover with effective treatment
- If you, or someone close to you is experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety, get help

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## Questions or Thoughts?



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## Resources

- Mental Health Commission of Canada
  - [www.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca)
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA)
  - [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)
- Association for Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies (ABCT)
  - [www.abct.org](http://www.abct.org)
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
  - [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)

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