

Mental Health in a “Post” Pandemic World

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"Half of mental health conditions begin by the age of 14 and 75% begin by the age of 24, but these issues often go undetected and untreated until they reach crises point"

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Is this just the tip of the iceberg?

- According to experts, we need to be prepared for a “tsunami of psychiatric illness” in the aftermath of the pandemic (Tandon, 2020).
- The prevalence of common mental health disorders is expected to rise during the post-pandemic time as a result of the long term effects of the pandemic, the restrictive measures such as social distancing and quarantine and the socio-economic effects. (Kathirvel, 2020).
- the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic can have long lasting impact on mental health (Galea et al, 2020).

Long Term Impact

- The long term impact is considerable and wide ranging including anxiety, anger, depression, post-traumatic stress symptoms, [substance] abuse, [self-medicating], [sense of grief and loss], and behavioural changes, such as avoiding crowded places and cautious hand washing. These psychological symptoms can last from several months up to three years after the quarantine period (Brooks et al, 2020).
- The mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic can persist and be long lasting for several years after the pandemic. Increases in the prevalence of common psychiatric disorders and suicide are expected during the post-pandemic time (Kathirvel, 2020).

How to recognize stress

- Stress is not always recognized, especially when a person is in a state of constant stress. Think about a time when you were relaxed and calm and felt no stress; perhaps it was when you were on vacation. What was your mood and energy level? Your patience level? Your sleep quality? How and what did you eat? How did your body feel? We often grow so accustomed to feeling stress that we no longer recognize what it feels like. Understanding how we feel and behave when we are stressed helps us to identify it, so we can implement stress management techniques and tools, and reach out for support when those tools are ineffective. (<https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/covid-mh/>)

Additional Information

- It takes 8-10 years on average, from the time a person starts to display symptoms of a mental illness, until the time they get treatment.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic downturn have negatively impacted mental health and created additional barriers for those who were already living with a mental health or substance use disorder.

<https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/covid-mh/>

Resilience

- Resilience involves thoughts and behaviors that can be learned and developed. It is through adversity that a person learns what they are capable of. An example is a person who has experienced the COVID-19 pandemic as a teacher and has shifted to remote instruction. It is not the experience, but how they weathered it. One person may have experienced the transition to remote instruction angrily, feeling taken advantage of, and put forth minimal effort. Another may have felt frustrated, but persevered to learn new technology, and figured out a way to continue teaching through a pandemic.

<https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/covid-mh/>

What do I do?

- Stay calm
- Validate
- Empathize
- Boundaries
- Refer
- Finally, Self-Care

Work Cited

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