



NEWS RELEASE

Michelle Pemberton
Public Information Officer
(970) 522-3741 x1239
michellep@nchd.org

May 6, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mental Health for Specific Populations

Sterling, Colo. – May 6, 2020: The pandemic of COVID-19 is creating a lot of stress for individuals, families, organizations and communities. There are steps all of us can take to cope with the stress of COVID-19 that will make us stronger. We all respond differently based on our background, personality as well as the community we live in and specific circumstances. Taking care of yourself, your family and friends can help you cope with the stress. Helping others cope with their stress can help make the entire community stronger. Elderly or medically higher risk adults, teens and children have specific needs that may need to be addressed.

Older adults and those who are at higher risk because of underlying medical conditions may have higher stress levels. Fear and anxiety can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. Concerns may include how to protect oneself against getting sick, as well as worry that regular medical care or community services are disrupted. They also might feel socially isolated, guilt over loved ones assisting them with daily needs, as well as increased distress if there are language barriers. It might be helpful to develop a care plan with family, caregiver(s) and primary care provider including health

conditions, medications, healthcare provider(s) and emergency contacts. Care plans can also improve overall medical management which results in a better quality of life.

If you have someone in your life that is an older adult or has higher risk due to underlying medical conditions, you can support them in several ways including staying connected. Daily scheduled phone or video calls, mailing cards/letters, social media or other communication methods can help loneliness and boredom. Make sure they have a 4 week supply of medications, monitor other medical supplies, stock up on non-perishable foods and stay home if you are sick so you don't potentially spread the virus to your loved one.

Children and teens often react based on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. If parents are better prepared they can be more reassuring to their children. Watch for behavior changes in your children such as excessive irritation, returning to behaviors they have outgrown, unhealthy eating/sleeping habits, poor school performance or avoidance of school, unexplained headaches or difficulty with attention/concentration.

There are several ways you can support your children or teens. Talk with them about COVID-19 and be sure to follow some basic principles including make yourself available to listen and talk, avoid language that might blame others or create stigma, pay close attention to what your children/teens are seeing or hearing on the radio, television or online. Provide information that is honest and accurate, teach them everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs (i.e., washing hands, cough or sneeze into their elbow.) Answer questions and share facts, reassure them that they are safe, try to keep up regular routines, and be a role model by eating healthy, getting plenty of sleep, exercise, and taking breaks from news reports.

Due to increased stress for individuals, families and organizations during this challenging time, we want to remind everyone that there is support through local counseling resources. To learn more about providers available in northeast Colorado go to <https://www.nchd.org/behavioralhealth>.

Another important local resource is the faith community. Local pastors and priests are available for you to talk and pray with as well.

#