
COMPREHENDING COVID

A TRI-BETA PANDEMIC NEWSLETTER

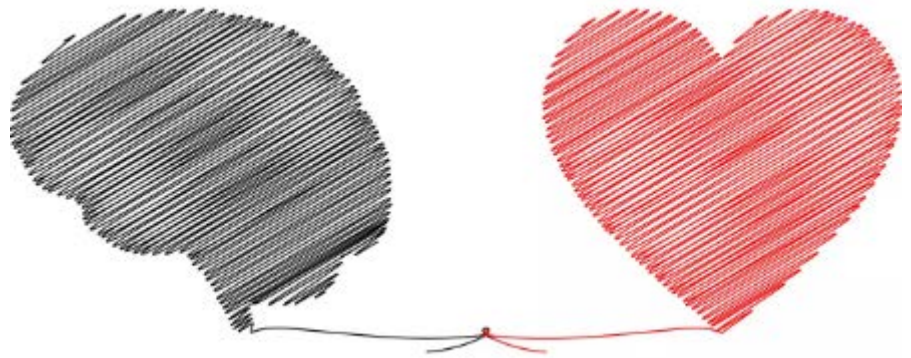
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THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is an important part of one's well being. It affects other aspects of our lives like how we feel and act during situations. The COVID-19 pandemic has noticeably affected much of the population due to the overwhelming nature of the precautions that need to be taken, as well as the fear revolving around the disease. Though necessary to reduce the impact of COVID-19, social distancing can make many feel isolated and lonely as it is now riskier to interact with others.

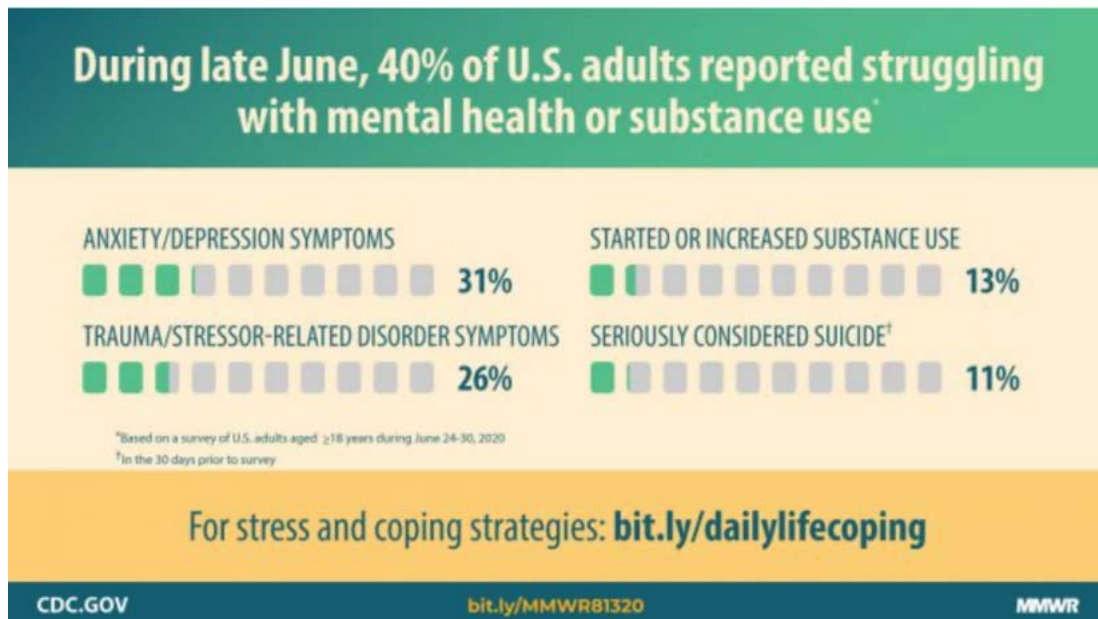
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Many communities have experienced an increase in mental health problems. 53 percent of adults in the US have reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted due to COVID-19. Essential workers and unpaid caregivers have also reported to experience worsened mental health challenges, an increase of substance use, and an increase of suicidal thoughts. Younger adults and racial minorities are seen to have a greater increase in mental health issues as well.

Because of these reports, it is important to address ways to acknowledge the increase of mental health conditions with prevention efforts. Coping properly during this pandemic is key. To learn more about the statistics and correlation of COVID-19 and Mental Health, please visit:

1. [The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Abuse](#)

2. [Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)



Retrieved from cdc.gov

COPING WITH THE STRESS OF COVID

In these unprecedented times, many aspects of our daily lives have become more stressful due to the effects of the pandemic. It's important to check in with ourselves and take care of our own mental health. Despite the feelings of isolation and anxiety that come with quarantine and virtual learning, there are many strategies we can use and activities to participate in that can relieve stress and keep us feeling connected to each other and the world around us.

Get Some Fresh Air

Stepping outside in between classes or during your free time can help you refocus and feel more tranquil. Spending time in greenspace can be incredibly beneficial for your health and mood, and it never hurts to absorb some sun and get some Vitamin D. Watching wildlife has a calming effect, and the sound of rushing water can soothe us as well. Go for a walk around your neighborhood to get your heart rate up, or visit a local park or nature reserve for a change of scenery. (Remember your mask if you'll be visiting a populated area!) Spending time outdoors is a great way to ease our minds from the stress of schoolwork and the pandemic.



Phone a Friend

Being in quarantine for months has led to a feeling of isolation, especially for students like us who are mostly stuck at home and participating in virtual learning. It's a big change to be separated from our roommates, friends, and the larger campus community. It's more important now than ever to keep in touch with your friends - even just sending a text can help lessen the feeling of separation! You could arrange a time with your friends to play online games together, or have group video chats to talk to everyone. There are also plenty of opportunities that TCNJ provides to connect with the campus community - make sure to check out your "This Week @ TCNJ" emails to see what virtual events are being offered!



COPING WITH THE STRESS OF COVID (CONT.)

Figure Out What Works For You!

There are plenty of coping strategies that we can use to lessen stress and anxiety, pandemic-related or otherwise. Meditation can be great for centering yourself, and doing artwork, crafts, or coloring pages can give us a creative outlet and alleviate stress. Some people take time to work on hobbies, like gardening, baking, or playing an instrument. The most important thing to figure out is which strategies work for you - not every coping strategy will work for everyone, and it's a good idea to explore different methods of dealing with stress so you can find a way that feels right. Though dealing with COVID-19 may be stressful, there are ways to lessen that stress that are effective and enjoyable. If you find yourself needing additional support, you can always reach out to the services available to you through TCNJ.

CARING FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19



Take breaks to relax and do activities you enjoy.



Take care of your body with exercise and a healthy diet.



Know the facts. Understanding the risks can make an outbreak less stressful.



Stay connected with family, friends, and a trusted support system



Ask for help if feelings become too overwhelming.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

CS316846-A 05/14/2020

COPING WITH COVID-19 AS A COLLEGE STUDENT

While the entire nation is battling the coronavirus, there is a growing crisis among college students struggling with the pandemic's social and economic repercussions. College students are placed under significant stress with their mental health as they struggle to manage home quarantining, social distancing, or missed milestones, like Homecoming. The emergency closures of campuses and sudden shifts to online instruction introduce a variety of stressors for students, who are scrambling to find jobs, while balancing their new academic workload with Zoom fatigue. These changes can often be associated with difficulties in concentrating, disruptions to sleeping patterns, concerns on academic performance, financial difficulties, increased social isolation and class workload, disruptions to eating patterns, and depressive thoughts. With these findings of the negative impact of COVID-19, it is extremely important to reach out for mental health resources, or other resources that can alleviate stress, during these difficult times.

The College of New Jersey offers health and wellness hours through an online platform that can offer therapy and counseling to students. However, these are not the only resources students are limited to. For issues involving social connectedness, This Week @ TCNJ shares upcoming events and opportunities for students to participate in activities, such as Jackbox Game Nights for prizes or Netflix parties, which help to foster a sense of community. There are also the TCNJ Center for Student Success workshops on time management in remote settings that can provide useful tips for a successful semester. Besides these resources from TCNJ, students can also improve their mental health by prioritizing and scheduling a sufficient amount of self-care per week. At least two activities, such as mindful coloring, a digital detox, a podcast, reading a book, at-home spa day, or new Netflix show, will help bring joy in your life!





With the uncertainty over the future, know that it is okay to feel how you are feeling. Taking a break or maintaining a routine can be hard, so start small! Create small goals of what you would like to achieve, whether it involves trying a new recipe or incorporating one physical activity each day. Our wellness consists of multiple facets: spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, social, environmental, and financial health. Ideally, we would like all these areas of health to be at their most optimal state. With quarantine, if students feel that their feelings are worsening to the extent that they do not feel like their normal self, they should reach out to the services offered for additional support, or try to slowly work on one area of their wellness to manage anxiety and have a stress resilience action plan.

TELEHEALTH AND VIRTUAL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

COVID-19 has vastly expanded the range of services that rely on virtual means of operation, with healthcare naturally being at the forefront of adapting to this new reality. Telehealth services have developed with exceptional speed to meet the needs of patients since quarantine began. There is significant evidence supporting the effectiveness of telemental health in particular. Through phone calls and video conferencing, telemental health has been used to address virtually any mental health concern that individuals were receiving care for pre-COVID. Outcomes have shown that telemental health has comparable safety and success as in-person mental health care.



The rising usage of telemental health naturally raises concerns about privacy and quality infrastructure. To address these issues, many HIPAA compliant teletherapy platforms are used, including SimplePractice, thera-LINK, and Doxy.me. Even non-medical platforms, like Zoom, comply with HIPAA Security Standards to improve the convenience and reach of telehealth services. In addition, a wide variety of mobile apps have been developed to address the needs of people seeking less formal care, without the direct support of a professional. These apps serve functions ranging from general mindfulness exercises to more personalized symptom tracking systems. Most popularly, the meditation app, Headspace, was found to significantly reduce stress when used for just 10 minutes a day. New York City's main crisis intervention service, NYC Well, has compiled a list of apps targeted to specific mental health needs, some of which include:

- **Calm**: A mindfulness app that provides curated meditations including ones specific to COVID-19 related anxiety
- **Ginger**: Strategies, activities and articles to help people stay grounded during the pandemic
- **Litesprite**: A clinically-validated mental health video game
- **Nod**: A resource for students to socially connect when coping with loneliness during quarantine

TELEHEALTH AND VIRTUAL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT (CONT.)

For a full list of the NYC Well COVID-19 Digital Mental Health Resources, visit their website: [NYC WELL](#)

TCNJ Mental Health Services (MHS) also provides different resources for students who prefer to stay within the TCNJ community for help or other reasons. They offer teletherapy, which can be done within groups, individually, or through workshops. Students will meet with licensed professionals who give the best plan of action, depending on the case, and will follow HIPAA guidelines. Medical professionals can refer students out to off-campus providers for further evaluation, medication, or testing.



If students are not comfortable sharing their concerns with mental health professionals, they can seek help from MHS Peer Educators, who are trained student advocates that work to provide more support and resources to fellow TCNJ students. To receive any of these services, a student must simply fill out the “Request For Service” Form found on the TCNJ MHS Clinical Services website.

To further read about and access the different clinical services offered by TCNJ’s Mental Health Services, visit their website: [MHS CLINICAL SERVICES](#)

