

How to maintain physical and mental health under the prevention of coronavirus(COVID-19) infection

I'm sure you are feeling a lot of stress from the behavioral restrictions that come with a series of infection control measures. It is a good chance now to review your own stress measures. I have compiled the measures below, and I hope you will read them carefully and use them in your own life.

(1) Have the mindset that feeling stress is a natural reaction.

It is natural to have a variety of reactions such as stress, confusion, sadness, anger, and fear when we are in a crisis situation. However, if you feel stressed or blame yourself for not being able to do what you want or need to do, or being afraid of bad situation, you may fall into a vicious cycle of becoming more and unhealthier. It's important to understand that things will turn out this way in an emergency, and to take it easy so that it doesn't get too bad.

(2) Avoid isolation.

Please maintain contact with friends and family members as well as co-workers and supervisors. It is generally less stressful to work in a team rather than alone. It also helps us to share information with each other. Interacting with people you care also encourage your own heart.

(3) Look for signs of stress accumulation (burnout, secondary traumatic stress).

You may feel extremely fatigued and overwhelmed (burnout), or you may experience your own stress response (secondary traumatic stress) by listening to people who have been infected or have come into close contact with COVID-19.

Signs of Burnout

Feeling Sadness / Feeling bad

Easy to get frustrated / Easy to blame others

Lack of emotion / Lack of interest

Feeling like being cut off from the surroundings

Inadequate self-care (grooming, bathing, brushing, etc.)

Feeling tired / Feeling overwhelmed

Feeling like making mistakes to everything.

Feeling like there's nothing you can do.

Needing alcohol and drugs to cope with the current situation.

Signs of secondary traumatic stress

Excessive worry or fear of bad events

Easy to be tired, always in a state of "on alert".

Physical signs of stress (e.g., a beating heart)

Recurring thoughts about nightmares or traumatic situations

Feeling as if you have experienced someone else's traumatic experience

(4) Make a few changes in your life to avoid accumulating stress.

It is said that taking a break, eating a well-balanced diet, exercising, and consulting with others you trust are helpful to prevent or reduce burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Some of you may think that you can't go for a walk or go outside for fear of infection. However, it is said that there is no problem to take a walk in a place that is not "dense", "airtight" or "close". If possible, it is a good idea to do about 30 minutes of outdoor exercise (walking, etc.) every day, in an area where there are no other people around, to improve the quality of your sleep, deal with stress, and maintain your physical strength through exercise. In addition to the above, please use the list below and any other methods that have helped you get through a difficult time in your life.

~Other ways to deal with stress ~.

- Obtain accurate and up-to-date public health information on the new coronavirus (WHO (World Health Organization) and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare)

- Balance the above information-gathering time with activities unrelated to segregation (e.g., reading, listening to music, learning a new language).
- Maintain a daily routine (e.g., change of clothes, daily activities such as work, exercise and study, healthy recreational activities)
- Maintain a virtual connection with others (e.g., phone calls, text messages, video chat, social media)
- Spend time interacting with your pet.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle (adequate sleep, diet and exercise. (Use of telephone and internet consultation as necessary)
- Avoid the use of alcohol and drugs as a way of coping with the stress of isolation. Use applications related to stress management (e.g., mindfulness, relaxation).

Please try to care not only for yourself, but also for your colleagues and friends. Minimizing your own damage will contribute to the improvement of the mental health of the entire organizations.

【For those who are currently receiving mental health services】

If you are currently receiving psychiatric treatment or psychological support, it is recommended that you keep in regular contact with your doctor or psychologist. It would be a good idea to discuss about what kinds of measures can be taken to prepare for the deterioration of the condition. NAIST Health Care Center is currently suspending face-to-face counseling, but is exploring methods such as remote counseling.

[Reference]

The following are related links. I hope this helps you.

American Psychological Association (2020). Keeping Your Distance to Stay Safe.

https://psych.or.jp/about/Keeping_Your_Distance_to_Stay_Safe_jp/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020). Emergency Responders: tips for taking care of yourself.

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/responders.asp>

Japanese Red Cross Society (2020). Series on "Maintaining Mental Health in a Period of Infectious Disease Epidemic".

http://www.jrc.or.jp/activity/saigai/news/200327_006138.html

(Revised from the Center for Consultation Support Research and Development, University of Tokyo)