

Mental and Relational Health amidst COVID-19
Discussion Outline and Resources
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4/29/2020



Mental Health Crisis Impending

Dr. Greg Jantz – At the Center - Place of Hope | www.aplaceofhope.com

What Mental Health Professionals are observing as a result of COVID-19 pandemic:

- Anxiety – physical symptoms beyond worry → OCD (hygiene, cleaning)
 - Other symptoms: digestion issues, can't slow down thinking, making poor decisions
 - Acute Anticipatory Anxiety – on the edge of desperation, or on the way over the edge
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Grief/Loss – lifestyle, future plans, sense of freedom
- Isolation
- Agoraphobia → fear of going out
- Anger
- Disillusionment – who to trust?
- Intrusive thoughts – negative, despairing, paranoia
- Kids soaking up parents' anxiety
- Chronic Stress and Anxiety compromising immune system

Potentially harmful coping behaviors

- Compulsive behavior – trying to control surroundings (e.g. – stockpiling irrationally, OCD)
- Escapism through potentially addictive substances
- Escapism through Digital Media – also potentially addictive (especially for teens)
- For some – social distancing leads to social isolation → leads to anxiety and depression

Recommended Habits to relieve Stress and Anxiety

1. Serve/Volunteer
2. Implement a daily habit of expressing gratitude
3. Find a spot in your house to sit each day – write your gratitudes, breath deep breaths to relieve tension. Make this spot your safe place.
4. Drink water
5. Establish and practice digital boundaries in your home – carve out time each day when you put your screens/devices away and focus on the people in front of you.
6. Extend forgiveness – perhaps this is a chance for a “reset” in relationships, talk about how you can improve your relationship together
7. Improve your sleep habits

8. For those who have developed harmful coping behaviors – find a safe person to talk to about these things. Church leaders and members should remove the “shame” that comes when someone has been struggling with unhealthy/addictive habits. Talk about it often and offer unconditional love and support.

Be aware and watching for those who have slipped into mental health crisis:

- ✓ Feelings of despair, trapped, loss of hope
- ✓ Suicidal thoughts
- ✓ Isolated and lonely
- ✓ Deep feelings of betrayal/anger toward God
- ✓ OCD/PTSD
- Help them find a Mental Health Professional: Bozeman Mental Health Urgent Care – Help Center 211, montana211.org

Other Resources: (several recent blog posts on COVID-19)

<https://www.aplaceofhope.com/how-to-look-after-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/>

Relational Health – Marriage and Couples

Les and Leslie Parrott – Clinical Psychologist, Marriage and Family Therapist, authors, speakers, professors, founders of Center for Healthy Relationships: <https://www.lesandleslie.com/>

Ministering to Couples during COVID-19 Crisis – “Hope is the Antidote to Fear”

What’s been hard?

- Abrupt Endings – grief/loss
- Sharing Spaces
- Conflict
- Lack of Self-Awareness

Don’t avoid Conflict – Conflict is the price way pay for deeper level of intimacy

Romans 12:18 - If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Ask – why are we fighting? Our perceptions differ:

- Perceived Threat
- Perceived Neglect

How to have a Good Fight – **C.O.R.E.** (Book: “The Good Fight” – Parrott)

- Cooperation – adopt a cooperative spirit, committed to resolution
- Ownership – put your pride away and own up to you did
- Respect – this is the opposite of contempt, hold partner in high regard/value
- Empathy – have partner’s perspective in mind

- In the midst of conflict, ask? Which one of these am I best at? Start there.

What if “blame-game” begins during conflict?

- Take a break from the conversation, start over and commit to C.O.R.E

How do we come out of this better?

- Work on yourself – Check out “Healthy Me/Healthy Us” – Parrott
- “If you try to build a relationship BEFORE you are whole, all your relational work will be an attempt to complete yourself.” -Parrott, “Relationships”
- Check your self-talk
- Become more self-aware

Need a marriage tune-up? Why not now?

SYMBIS Relationship/Marriage Assessment (\$30/couple) - <https://www.symbis.com/>

Paul and Angela VL – SYMBIS Certified Facilitators

2:2 mentorship and/or small group facilitators