



Southeastern Idaho Public Health

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Protecting Your Mental Health During a Pandemic

During the COVID-19 outbreak, people need to pay attention to their feelings and find ways to manage the added stress they may be experiencing. People respond differently to stress, but common signs of stress include: changes in eating or sleeping patterns, difficulty concentrating, worsening health problems, and increased use of alcohol or drugs.

Tips for staying mentally healthy:

1. Limit time spent watching, listening to, or reading the news, including social media. Find out what you need to know and then move on to a different activity.
2. Take care of your body. When we are stressed, it is easy to leave healthy habits behind. Eat healthy foods, and drink water. Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol. Do not use tobacco or illegal drugs. Get enough sleep and rest. Get physical exercise but be sure to distance yourself from others if you exercise outdoors.
3. Establish and maintain routines. Routines help us feel secure by providing a sense of normalcy during change. Maintain regular times for meals, school work, going to bed and waking up, exercise, social time, and be sure to include time for play and relaxation.
4. Do what helps you feel safe. Rely upon the coping skills you regularly use to get through your day. Actions or ways of thinking a person uses to deal with stressful situations are called “coping skills.” Coping skills might include practicing activities like counting to ten to manage feelings of frustration, journaling, guided meditation, breathing exercises, or spiritual practices.
5. Stay socially connected while practicing physical distancing. Today’s technology – mobile phones, tablets, and internet connections - can keep us close to our loved ones until we can gather together safely again.

By following public health recommendations, we the have opportunity to protect ourselves and our families from COVID-19 infection. By paying attention to our thoughts and emotions and finding healthy ways to ease tension, we protect our feelings our safety and wellbeing.

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare has created an Idaho COVID-19 Distress Hotline at 888-330-3010 for anyone experiencing any type of distress from feeling overwhelmed or isolated, a mental health challenge, substance use disorder, or seeking resources.

For more information about COVID-19, call SIPH’s hotline at 208.234.5875; visit siphidaho.org or watch SIPH’s Facebook Live, Monday – Friday at 11:00 a.m.