



• WE ARE LISTENING •

COVID 19 AND MENTAL HEALTH

A lot of anxiety is rooted in worrying about the unknown and waiting for something to happen, COVID-19 is that on a macro scale

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **Coping with stress and anxiety**
 - Strategies to maintain your mental your mental wellness during the Covid-19 Pandemic
- **Ambassador Program**
- **Contact Us**

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COVID-19 has plunged the world into uncertainty, and constant news about the pandemic can feel relentless. All of this is taking a toll on people's mental health, particularly those already living with conditions like ANXIETY and OCD.

SO HOW CAN WE PROTECT OUR MENTAL HEALTH?

Being concerned about the news is understandable, but for many people it can make existing mental problems worse. The fear of being out of control and unable to tolerate uncertainty are common characteristics of many anxiety disorders. Hence, understandable that many individuals with pre-existing anxiety are facing challenges at the moment.

COPING WITH STRESS AND ANXIETY

The COVID-19 pandemic can cause stress and anxiety because it is disrupting normal life for many people all at once. While it is important to be informed and to take action to limit the spread of infection, the amount of information and attention on this topic can increase stress and anxiety.

STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

What has worked for you before that helps manage your stress and anxiety? You can still rely on many of those strategies. One challenge is that the response to pandemics can disrupt routines, people may stop the activities they use to keep well (e.g. exercise) and engage in activities that can make things worse.

Here are some ideas that might be helpful. Some might apply to you and some might not – or they may need to be adopted to suit your personality, depending on where and with whom you live.

Please be creative and experiment with these ideas and strategies.

✓ AVOID BURNOUT:

With weeks and months of this COVID-19 pandemic ahead, it's important to have down time. Mind recommends continuing to access nature and sunlight whenever possible. Do exercise, eat well and stay hydrated. We suggest practicing the "APPLE" technique to deal with anxiety and worries.

- **ACKNOWLEDGE:** Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.
- **PAUSE:** Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Pause and breathe.
- **PULL BACK:** Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this apparent need for certainty is not helpful and not necessary. It is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think.
Thoughts are not statements or facts.
- **LET GO:** Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.
- **EXPLORE:** Explore the present moment, because right now, this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell. Right now! The shift your focus of attention to something else- on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry, or do something else- mindfully with your full attention.

✓ FIND A BALANCE: STAY TUNED IN, BUT KNOW WHEN TO TAKE A BREATHER

While staying informed is helpful, too much information may not provide extra benefit. Limit checking source to once per day or less if you can. This includes reading or listening to news stories about COVID-19. Even though things are shifting rapidly, daily changes are not likely to affect how you could manage your risk. **Bring an intentional mindset to unplugging:**

- Set aside some time to unplug from all electronics, including phone, tablets and computers. Disconnect for a while from social media outlets. You may need to schedule this to make sure it happens.
- Do something fun and healthy for yourself instead (e.g., read, work, exercise).

Remember that you are resilient and be careful with the 'What If's':

Our stress and anxiety generally cause us to focus on negatives and trigger 'what if' questions, such as "how will I cope if I get sick?" or "how will I manage if I have to self-

isolate?" *They can also drive us to think about worst case scenarios:*

- In stressful situations, people often overestimate how bad the situation can get, but underestimate how well they will be able to cope. People are resilient and have coping skills they use every day. Think of difficult or challenging situations you have encountered that you were able to manage.
- Even if things weren't perfect, what did you do to cope with the situation? Remind yourself that you can handle stress and that if you feel you need support, you can reach out to family, friends, colleagues or professionals.
- Try to replace catastrophic thoughts with something like, "This is definitely a difficult time, but we will get through it together." **Don't underestimate** what you are able to do when faced with challenges.

✓ **DEAL WITH PROBLEMS IN A STRUCTURED WAY:**

All the issues you might need to address during this pandemic situation may feel **overwhelming**. It can be useful to identify which things are actually problems that need to be solved or addressed, and which are not necessarily grounded in reality.

✓ **DECREASE OTHER STRESS:**

COVID-19 is probably not the only source of stress in your life right now. Consider addressing other sources of stress to reduce your overall level of anxiety.

Challenge your thinking, practicing relaxation and meditation or other strategies you may have used in the past that have helped.

Practice relaxation and meditation:

Relaxation strategies and meditation can help reduce or manage your levels of stress and anxiety. There are many options to consider:

- Formal Meditation Practice such as Yoga or Mindfulness Meditation.
- Informal or Self-Help Approaches such as books and online videos.
- Relaxation through any activity that you find enjoyable and relaxing.

Choose an activity that works for you and that you are likely to continue doing. Start slowly and gradually work towards a regular practice.

✓ **SEEK SUPPORT:**

Social distancing does not mean you break off all contact from loved ones. Being alone can lead to spending too much time thinking about the current situation, resulting in increased stress and anxiety. It can be helpful to connect with people who are a positive influence when you are feeling stressed. Try to avoid people who are negative when talking about current affairs or events, or who generally increase your stress and anxiety.

✓ **EAT HEALTHY:**

Eating healthy can help us feel better. When we are stressed, many people might choose comfort foods that are not actually good for stress and overall health. As much as possible, choose more fruits and vegetables, and drink lots of water.

✓ **STAY ACTIVE:**

Physical Activity is a great way to reduce stress and anxiety and improve our mood and overall health. If you are self-isolated, find ways to exercise in your home. For example, use your stairs or follow an exercise video on YouTube.

✓ **CHALLENGER WORRIES AND ANXIOUS THOUGHTS:**

High levels of anxiety and stress are usually fueled by the way we think. For example, you might be having thoughts such as, "I am going to die" or "I won't be able to cope". These thoughts can be so strong that you believe them to be true. However, not all our thoughts are facts, many are simple beliefs that we hold. Sometimes we have held these beliefs for so long that they feel like facts. Here are some ways to work through and challenge your worries and anxious thoughts:

- Start with catching your thoughts.
- When you are feeling anxious or stressed, stop and write down what you are thinking.
- There may be more than one thought going through your mind when you are feeling anxious.

- Once you have identified our thoughts, challenge them
- Ask yourself:
 - Is this thought true?
 - How do I know it's true?
 - Is it 100% true and always true?
 - What is the evidence for the thought?
 - What is the evidence against the thought?
 - Has the thing I'm worried about ever happened before?
 - What actually happened?
 - How did I cope?
 - What was the end result?
- After working through these approaches, see if you can come up with a more balanced thought.

✓ KEEP LOOKING FORWARD

Remember the famous saying, "This too shall pass". It may not feel like it, but things will return to normal. In the meantime, it is important to have confidence that things will improve, that people will recover, and things will get back to normal. In addition to maintaining your long-term goals, also think about things that you will do each day and week, which you can and will enjoy. Again, try and bring others into your plans, they might also benefit from thinking about the future. Most importantly maintain social distancing.

Life during lockdown is challenging. We may feel exhausted and worn out. Don't let this feeling overcome you – distract from stressful situations and use the new found time in a productive way. Be positive, protect yourself and be supportive to others. Assisting others relieves our own anxieties too.

Together, we can have a better tomorrow.

AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME

TICC believes that Mental Health services are not an accessory to a healthy lifestyle, but they form the foundation for leading a wholesome way of life.

Founded in 2016, Thapar Institute Counselling Cell continues to deliver quality mental health services to its students. However, being a student has its own set of challenges that can be understood by no one better than a student himself. Keeping in mind the inherent bonhomie that students share among them, TICC launched its Ambassador Program in May 2020.

WHO ARE THEY?

- They are the students who are passionate about Mental Health and its propagation with guidance from the Institute's Counsellors.
- These ambassadors are given training on how to conduct themselves as mental health representatives under the leadership of Mental Health Professionals.
- They are someone who you can go to for any matter, even for just venting out.

WHY DO THEY EXIST?

- They have the aim of making the campus free from stigmas around mental health.
- Endeavored at making Reaching Out easier, the Ambassador Program is an initiative for all. The Ambassadors are the ones who get your problems, your sufferings because they have been at your place and they know how it feels.
- They are your confidantes with whom you can share and discuss anything at any time.

HOW TO APPROACH ONE OF THEM?

- Contacting them is super easy. Just ping them on their Instagram account, or at @ticc.official and they will be there.
- No worries if you don't have an Instagram account. You can mail them anytime and they will reach out to you as early as possible.
(Contact Details available on TICC's website and IG account)

WHY SHOULD YOU TRUST THEM?

- They promote TICC services and serve as a link between the students and professional counsellors.
- They have received proper training and guidance from the counsellors.
- They are someone who along with companionship, maintain a sense of professionalism, so fingers locked, your secrets are safe with them.

They are the chosen ones:

The Ambassadors are recruited based on an evaluation by the professional counsellor herself. Zealous and enthusiastic students who have a desire to learn, help and promote a positive environment, get selected. The Student Ambassador program aims at making TIET a safe space for its pupils, where they can be their authentic selves without any predisposed prejudice. The Ambassador program aims at erasing the stigma surrounding Mental Health one step at a time.

To get in touch with our student ambassadors, do check out:

Our Website: ticc.thapar.edu

Our Instagram Page: www.instagram.com/ticc.official

CONTACT US

Thapar Institute Counseling Cell (TICC) understands the current feelings of anxiety & distress, and offers advice for your well-being. Your first appointment is a brief consultation where they can discuss options available. If you are interested in counseling and would like to learn more, please see our '**Counselling Manual**'. We are offering all are counselling services in online mode till normalcy is restored. **To make an appointment contact:**

Thapar Institute Counselling Cell (TICC)

(Monday - Friday, 9am-5:30pm)

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To provide a compassionate, inclusive and student-centered service, embedding high quality social integration, academic development and mental health services in the line of vision of TIET.



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