Coronavirus Disease 2019

Ohio | **Department of Health**

Experiencing Trauma Related to the COVID-19 Epidemic

Protecting Against COVID-19

Trauma can result from exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally disturbing or life-threatening. This can have lasting adverse effects on functioning and on mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being.

Trauma can be a pervasive problem for some groups, especially groups that are either in the role of providing care or in the role of protectors (e.g., police, fire, emergency medical services, emergency dispatch/communication).

Secondary traumatic stress can result from hearing about or seeing traumatic experiences in others.

If you experience signs or symptoms of trauma, seek mental health treatment. Trauma treatment is proven to be effective.

Experiences that may be traumatic include:
- Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.
- Childhood neglect.
- Living with a family member with mental health or substance use disorders.
- Sudden, unexplained separation from a loved one.
- Poverty.
- Racism, discrimination, and oppression.
- Violence in the family or community.
- War or terrorism.

Symptoms that can indicate trauma has occurred:
- Recurrent upsetting memories or dreams of an event.
- Symptoms of depression such as changes in sleep and eating patterns, increased negative beliefs about oneself or others, losing interest in activities that were once pleasureful, unable to feel positive emotions or emotional detachment (numbing).
- Symptoms of anxiety or panic attacks such as difficulty concentrating, headaches, stomach

problems or other physical reactions, irritability, and anger.
- Repressed memories.
- Decrease in or loss of self-esteem.
- Disassociation, a feeling of being detached from one's body or experiencing the world as if it is not real.

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can also cause:
- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones.
- Feelings of guilt about not being near a loved one.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Continued exposure to people in trauma can impact well-being and cause:
- Feeling emotionally, mentally and physically tired.
- Loss of hope.
- Reduced sense of accomplishment.
- Seeing the world as far more dangerous than it is.
- General distrust.
- Increased protectiveness of loved ones.

Unhealthy coping mechanisms:
- People affected by trauma may develop coping mechanisms to help alleviate the emotional and/or physical pain they feel as a result of trauma. These can include behaviors such as unhealthy eating, tobacco use, or drug and alcohol use. These coping mechanisms may provide some relief, but they can also simultaneously contribute to anxiety, social isolation, and chronic diseases.

Things you can do to support yourself:
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

Tips for managers and administrators:
- Make information about secondary traumatic stress available to staff and families including signs, where to go for help, self-care strategies.
- Create an environment/culture that makes it OK to acknowledge emotions and provides opportunities for self-care like mindfulness to decrease reactivity and increase control.

For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov

- Have regular check-ins and coaching with staff, and debrief at the end of each shift.

For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available. Call the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 (1-800-846-8517 TTY); connect with a trained counselor through the Ohio Crisis Text Line by texting the keyword "4HOPE" to 741 741; or call the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services help line at 1-877-275-6364 to find resources in your community.
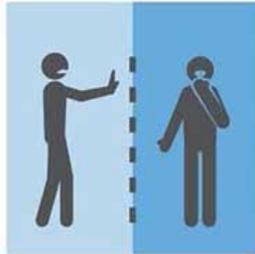
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Protect yourself and others from COVID-19 by taking these precautions.

PREVENTION

For additional information call **1-833-4-ASK-ODH** or visit **coronavirus.ohio.gov**.

STAY HOME

PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

GET ADEQUATE SLEEP AND EAT WELL-BALANCED MEALS

WASH HANDS OFTEN WITH WATER AND SOAP (20 SECONDS OR LONGER)

DRY HANDS WITH A CLEAN TOWEL OR AIR DRY YOUR HANDS

COVER YOUR MOUTH WITH A TISSUE OR SLEEVE WHEN COUGHING OR SNEEZING

AVOID TOUCHING YOUR EYES, NOSE, OR MOUTH WITH UNWASHED HANDS OR AFTER TOUCHING SURFACES

CLEAN AND DISINFECT "HIGH-TOUCH" SURFACES OFTEN

CALL BEFORE VISITING YOUR DOCTOR

PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE HABITS

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