

Hwang Offers Resources to Help with Anxiety and Depression



April 2020 will bring upon us unacknowledged dangers from the unprecedented ongoing healthcare pandemic, and their ominous signs are only now evident. COVID-19 will impact many, and now more than ever we must take extra care to protect both our physical and mental health. The isolation and social distancing being employed against the coronavirus will likely thwart the spread of the disease. They may also unintentionally increase anxiety and depression among many of our neighbors, friends, and family members. We all respond to stress in different ways. Regardless of age, many will struggle with loneliness, and others will deal with guilt and shame because they happened to infect people.

These mental health concerns, however, can be lessened. First, we must acknowledge our vulnerability. Two weeks of isolation and distancing have passed, but we may have another thirty days to go, at a minimum. Our resiliency may suffer, and our patience, too. When they do, we cannot allow pride, stigma or fear to stand in the way of getting help. When the pain doesn't go away, we must not delay in reaching out. Through the United Way of Connecticut, 2-1-1 provides counseling support for those in need. Call them anytime. Crisis Text Line can be reached by texting TALK to 741-741. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) also has valuable resources

available at afsp.org/covid19. Lastly, don't forget to check with your healthcare provider about telehealth services that provide help over the phone or online.

We must also stay positive. Many mental health agencies, including Crisis Text Line and AFSP, provide daily inspirational messages and helpful ways to remain upbeat and safe. They are available across all social media platforms. We are happy to report that many towns and houses of worship have established teams of people in need, especially the elderly. The importance of staying engaged with others can't be understated. Seeing a friendly face on a screen or hearing a voice on the phone will elevate anyone's mood. We must also not neglect the younger generation, who can be just as lonely as the elderly.

The support of our country's mental health is as much a public health concern as is the coronavirus. America will be different after the pandemic passes. The choices we make now will determine what kind of country we will be. We have already lost much.

The young have lost plays and performances, sporting events and championships, and dates and proms. Older people have potential job and financial insecurity. But we are confident that with community engagement and supportive services everyone can find goodness and hope in these quiet days.

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