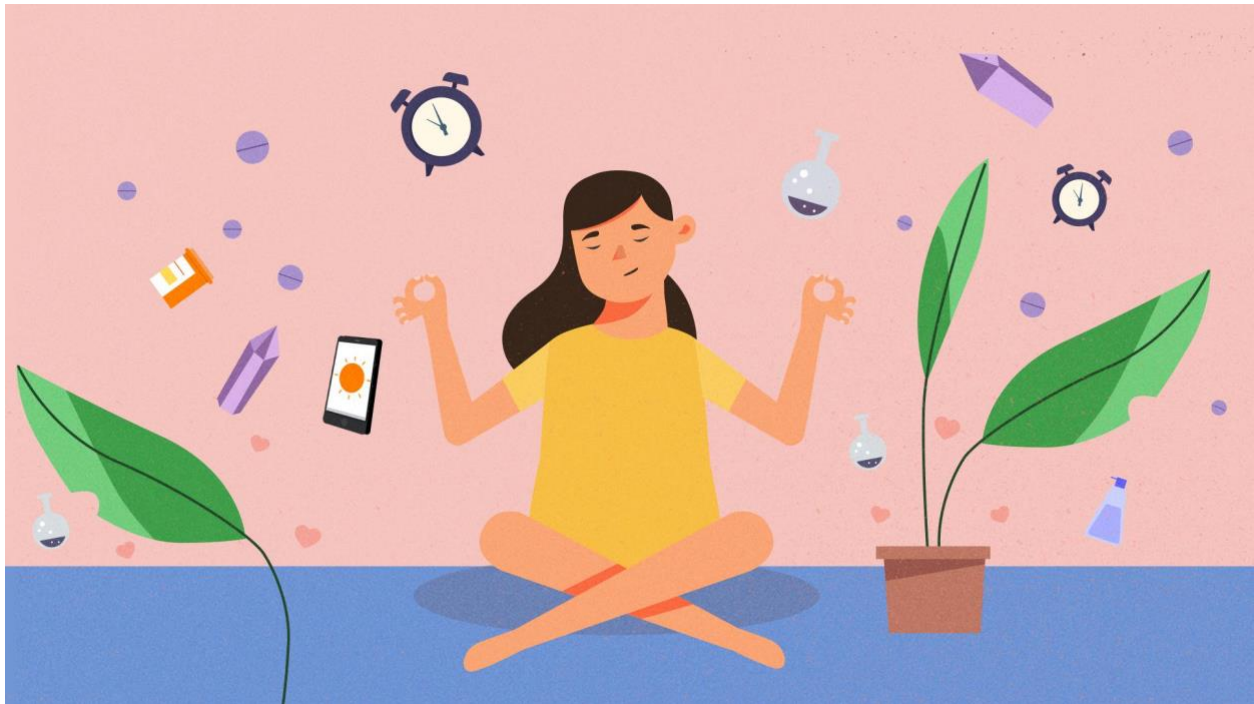# Mental health Post COVID-19

A self-care manual

The MINDS Foundation is a non-governmental organisation committed to the cause of community mental health with the vision is to create a world that fosters a shared approach to mental wellness — in which anyone, anywhere can access the resources they deserve. The second wave of the pandemic hit hard, resulting in multitudinal grief and loss. As the unlock takes place, this resource, "Self-care during COVID-19" is a self-care manual aimed at encouraging us to continue taking care of ourselves. Despite the unlock and relief in regulations, we must continue to practice the care for better physical as well mental health. This manual caters to readers across ages.

We hope that you and your loved ones stay healthy and happy.

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COVID-19 and its psychological impact

Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by the Coronavirus. Its first case was reported in Wuhan in December 2019, since then this virus has affected the entire world. With a high rate of infection accompanied by mortality and an absence of a definitive line of treatment, it was soon realized that the day-to-day activities would have to be restricted to curb the spread of this disease. Pertaining to the International Health Regulation (IHR), countries started to implement social distancing and lockdown. It induced a sense of fear and uncertainty. The gruesome reports and images on social media added to the anxiety and fear for loved ones and self.

Impact on children

Covid-19 has affected people of all age groups and walks of life both psychologically and psychosocially. The impact of Covid-19 on Children is immense. Unlike adults they can't call a friend and speak to them, or even express themselves to their parents. Young Children are especially vulnerable. They are experiencing delayed emotional and social development. Children

are exhibiting Increased irritability, poor sleep, appetite, inattention, and separation anxiety.

School-going children fall prey to long boring routines. The online medium of education isn't very engaging for these young minds and is often distracting due to other activities going on at home. Children are seen to be even more dependent and seek more attention from their parents. Among the less fortunate socioeconomic status there is an increase in violence and abuse against children. Self-harming behavior also increased among children living in disturbed environments. Children have also developed social anxiety due to long periods of absence of social interaction inevitably affecting their lives when they go back to school. Examination uncertainty has triggered depression and anxiety in high school and intermediate students. The increase in the use of social media has exposed children to all sorts of objectionable content and increasing their vulnerability to bullying.

Children with special needs and conditions such as Autism, ADHD, OCD are experiencing great challenges due to the pandemic and lockdown. Their symptoms have aggravated, and their condition has regressed due to the restriction and change in their schedule. They are unable to get behavioral therapies which they are in dire need of. There are increased episodes of emotional outbursts of anger and tantrums which are also affecting their parents and other caregivers.

Children are also facing separation from their parents because of them getting infected with Covid-19, triggering an array of emotional responses. The children are fearful and end up crying for their parents and refusing to eat. Many children have lost their parents and loved ones due to Covid-19 deeply affecting their mental health.

Impact on young adults & adults

Young individuals are victims of poor mental health due to shutting down of colleges, unemployment, losing their parents and loved ones due to Covid-19. They often find themselves alone and a constant feeling of loneliness looms over them causing anxiety and depression provoking suicidal thoughts. An increase in consumption of alcohol and substance abuse are also reported among adults. Women are subjected to domestic violence due to frustration

and a toxic home environment. Income instability is one of the main causes of men developing mental health disorders. People whose lives are affected by covid are suffering from PTSD. People exhibit irrational behavior out of the fear of contracting the disease. Those from low socioeconomic status are suffering to a great extent. Apart from the loss of jobs, they are subjected to discrimination as people fear they are spreaders of the disease. The adverse effects of social media are seen throughout all age groups and communities.

Impact on elderly

Older adults are fearful as Covid-19 is life-threatening in this age group, causing a lot of psychological distress. Social distancing and disconnection cause loneliness, especially among widowed individuals. A lot of people lost their children and spouses to Covid-19 resulting in depression and PTSD.

SELF-CARE & COVID-19

**What entails Covid-19 Self-care?**

Self-care is your right to nurture yourself. It is not simply an individualistic or selfish task, but a means to achieve a stress-free end to engage in your life healthily. The World Health Organization (WHO) states self-care as "your ability to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health-care provider is known as self-care" (2020).

Uncertainty looms over us during these times of crisis wherein fear, anxiety, and stress are hard to keep at bay. Listening to your own calls for help is the first step of self-care. Self-care helps you find and perform activities that will reduce stress, improve the immune system, increase productivity, and help obtain higher self-esteem (Lawler, 2021). Self-care is no *one size fits all* so, try out different activities to find out what suits you the best. Self-care will help you get into a better position to deal with everyday life.

Covid-19 self-care tips:

Physical self-care

- Prioritize healthy sleeping patterns (7-8 hours daily)

- Try new forms of exercising
  - Zumba
  - Online dance/yoga workouts
  - Home workout plans

- Keep stress-busting foods near
  - Soup, herbal tea, avocado, dark chocolate, leafy greens, citrus fruits, nuts

- Keep stress-inducing foods away
  - Caffeine, alcohol, refined sugars

- Clean or organize any part of your house

- Pick up a hobby
  - Home gardening
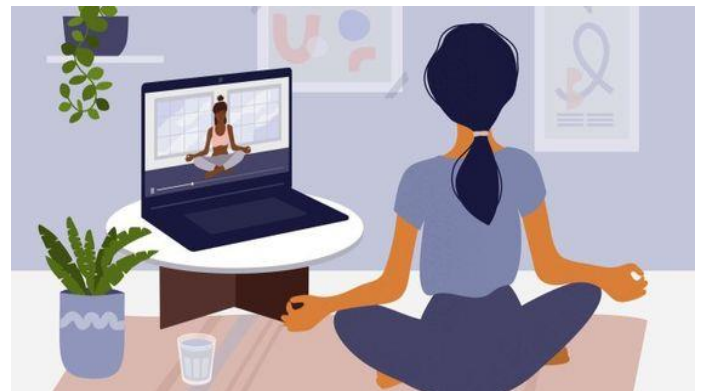
- Learn a new language/instrument
- Join an online course
- Try art therapy- painting, drawing

- Give yourself a makeover
  - Dress up
  - Fashion new nails/jewelry
  - Try skincare remedies at home

- Schedule a doctor's appointment
  - Taking care of routine medical check-ups is essential even in a crisis.

Mental self-care

- Self-reflection & introspection
  - Reflect on personal signs of stress
  - Make a 'don't do' list – self-care can include eliminating habits and/or items to feel better

- Positive habits for self
  - Positive self-talk
  - Practice kindness & gratitude
  - Practice positive affirmation

- Limit your news consumption
  - Use reliable news sources
  - Take time off, if it makes you anxious
 - Avoid reading headlines before bedtime

- Talk it out
  - The pandemic is a time of crisis that is bound to affect our mental health. Speaking about your feelings with a professional will help you in dealing with your situations better.

Spiritual self-care

- Meditation
  - Practice diaphragm breathing, alternate nostril breathing
  - Download meditation apps or listen to soothing music while practicing meditation

- Lean on your personal beliefs and faith
  - Take out time for practicing your prayers/rituals
  - Read and learn more about your faith

- Set journaling goals
  - Note down your thoughts, feelings
  - Reflect upon things that you are grateful for
  - Design your journal according to the best version of 'you'

Social self-care

- Find time to talk with others – social connection is important for mental well-being
  - Meet friends/family if the situation allows
  - Engage in online meets

- Use social media mindfully
  - It should be a safe space to socialize
  - Make your use intentional by being selective of the people you follow and the tools you use
  - Consider taking some time off social media if it burdens you mentally

- Mindful online interactions
  - Take messages on the face value
  - Don't dwell on certain aspects; ask your doubts if need be
  - Be clear in your communication
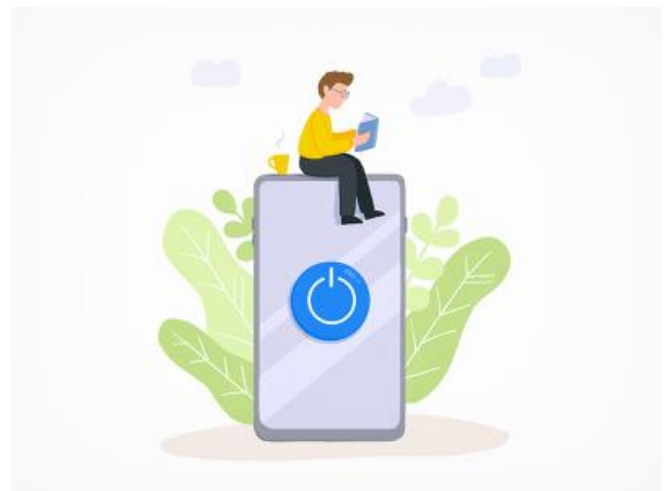
Self-care practices for children

For young children, their care lies in the hands of their parents. Healthy parenting can be a valuable tool to manage the mental health of children.

- Practices for young children
- Encourage a positive and open communication
- Set a routine
- Create a positive environment
- Engage them with one-on-one activities or make them do small tasks to instill a sense of belonging
- Set them a bath
- Take care of their diet and avoid unhealthy food
- Love your child and be patient with them
- Avoid too much screen time

- Practices for school going children
- Educate them over Covid-19 to avoid any misinformation induced panic
- Avoid constantly nagging and telling them what to do
- Encourage them to pick new hobbies
- Communicate and engage them in a dialogue about them.
- Help them stay connected with their peers
- Harbor safe social media practices and talk to them about it.
- Ask them if they are facing any problem
- Provide constant reassurance

- Practices for children with special needs
- Talk to their doctor and be aware of their needs
- Be patient and kind to them
- Set a routine
- Take care of their food
- Connect with their doctor through telecommunication
- Control what you can, don't forget to give yourself a break.

- Practices for the third wave of Covid-19
- Set a routine for children
- Try to avoid the uncertain situations bringing instability to their lives.
- Keep them physically active
- Keep them connected with their peers
- Find activities for them to do online
- Stay connected with them during sickness.

World Health Organization

Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak

Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated, bedwetting etc.

Respond to your child's reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns and give them extra love and attention.

Children need adults' love and attention during difficult times. Give them extra time and attention.

Remember to listen to your children, speak kindly and reasure them.

If possible, make opportunities for the child to play and relax.

Try and keep children close to their parents and family and avoid separating children and their caregivers to the extent possible. If separation occurs (e.g. hospitalization) ensure regular contact (e.g. via phone) and re-assurance.

Keep to regular routines and schedules as much as possible, or help create new ones in a new environment, including school/learning as well as time for safely playing and relaxing.

Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age.

This also includes providing information about what could happen in a re-assuring way (e.g. a family member and/or the child may start not feeling well and may have to go to the hospital for some time so doctors can help them feel better).

Self-care practices for young adults & adults

- Form a routine
- Follow a healthy sleep pattern
- Eat intuitively- know your body's signals and form healthy eating habits
- Exercise – yoga, meditation, online workout videos, walks

- Find a work-life balance
- Try to maintain a dedicated workspace
- Take regular breaks
- Communicate your needs
- Form realistic expectations
- Find time for yourself

- Stay connected
- Make time for socializing online
- Use social media mindfully

- Take care of your body
- Avoid mindless snacking
- Keep a check on your caffeine intake
- Follow a skin-care routine
- Maintain healthy hygiene habits

COVID CHAOS
HOW TO KEEP YOURSELF GOING STRONG

EAT WELL

Ensure you are eating well.
Get a healthy balanced diet. Ensure you eat at least 5 portions of fruit and veg daily.
Eat regularly through the day to ensure blood sugar doesn't drop, and cause the afternoon slump when working from home.

HYDRATE

Ensure you have at least 8 glasses of water daily.
All fluids count towards fluid balance however water is key. Try and flavour it with lemon or lime if you find water a bit boring. Get a bottle to prompt you with regular fluid intake.

MOVE

Working from home can mean many of us are not moving as much. No walks to the bus stop , or to the coffee shop along the road for lunch. Gyms are closed and it's cold out. Just doing a short set of simple stretches can get the blood moving and prevent aches and pains.

SEPARATE HOME AND WORK

It's tough working in the living room or other home space. Not everyone can have an office. So make sure you set rules, and stick to it. No checking emails after work, don't work late, and try and put away work items to make space feel more like home.

TAKE SOME TIME

Everyone needs to relax. Usual stress relief methods may not work (gym, socialising, date night). Try something new. Have a bath, read a book, start a blog, get creative. Time to unwind and relax. It can help reduce stress and anxiety.

LEARN MORE AT NUTRITIONBYNICOLE.CO.UK

- Start journaling
  - Record your daily activities/feelings
  - Set realistic & achievable goals to keep a check on progress
  - Customize according to your likes

- Learn new skills or find a hobby
  - Foreign language
  - Musical instrument
  - Cooking/baking
  - Online courses
  - New exercise routine
  - Gardening
  - Creative writing

- Listen to yourself
  - Sit with your thoughts, don't avoid them
  - Practice positive self-talk & positive affirmation
  - Try mindful listening- stay in the present and acknowledge yourself & your surroundings
  - Ask for help if you need it

Daily Self Reflection

JOURNAL PROMPTS

#1 WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT TODAY?

#2 TODAY, WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE THINGS YOU ARE MOST GRATEFUL FOR?

#3 WHAT DO YOU VALUE MOST ABOUT TODAY?

#4 HOW DID YOU STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF TODAY?

#5 IF YOU DID NOT STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF, HOW CAN YOU DO BETTER NEXT TIME?#6 WHO DID YOUR DAY BETTER?

#7 CURRENTLY, WHO ARE THE PEOPLE THAT MEAN THE MOST TO YOU?

#8 HOW MUCH QUALITY TIME DID YOU SPEND WITH THESE PEOPLE TODAY?

#9 TOMORROW, HOW CAN YOU BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT SPENDING QUALITY TIME WITH THEM?

#10 CURRENTLY, WHAT ARE YOUR THREE BIGGEST GOALS?

#11 WHAT DID YOU DO TODAY TO BE ONE STEP CLOSER TO ACHIEVING THEM

#12 WHAT CHANGE CAN YOU MAKE TOMORROW TO BE ONE STEP CLOSER TO THOSE GOALS?

#13 WHAT IS CURRENTLY NOT HELPING YOU AND NEEDS TO BE REMOVED FROM YOUR TO-DO LIST?

#14 ARE YOU LIVING IN A WAY THAT REFLECTS THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE?

#15 IF YOU KEEP LIVING LIFE THIS WAY, WOULD YOU BECOME THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE?

#16 TOMORROW, WHAT CAN YOU ADJUST YOUR BEHAVIOR AND PERSPECTIVE TO BE MORE ALIGNED TO THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE?

#17 HOW CAN YOU MAKE TOMORROW BETTER?

GET ALL THE PROMPTS AT WWW.ISABELLEDIAS.COM

Source:https://in.pinterest.com/pin/304133781089417566/

Self-care practices for elderly

- Set a routine
- Enjoy your morning cup of tea and newspaper
- Indulge in some form of light physical exercise
- Eat healthily and take care of your other physiological conditions

- Mind exercises
- Meditate
- Practice spirituality in a way that makes you happy
- Listen to music
- Keep yourself positive and motivated

- Cut down on screen time
- Be kind to others

- Find activities to do
- Declutter and clean that messy cupboard
- Start the hobby you always wanted to do
- Cook a new dish

- Stay connected
- Hold conversations with your family
- Tell them about your experience
- Call your children and grandchildren
- Connect with your friends and other relatives
- Use video call or voice conferencing
- Be mindful of the information on social media

- Seek help
- Don't hesitate in reaching out to others
- Talk to a healthcare professional if you're in distress.

Social distancing is not emotional distancing.

Being physically apart does not mean we have to be emotionally isolated.

Share things that make you smile :)

Practice gratitude and kindness.

Keep in touch with friends and family.

We are here to support you. Reach out to us any time.

The MINDS Foundation 24 hours x 7 days a week Toll-Free Mental Health Helpline
1-8005-477-200

Virtual Psychotherapy
E-mail   therapy@mindsfoundation.org
www.mindsfoundation.org/counseling