

Info Sheet: SUPPORT YOURSELF DURING THESE STRESSFUL TIMES COVID-19

Stress is a state of mind that upsets the balance of the human body and is perceived to be threatening to the individual. Stress is a physiological reaction, necessary to adapt to the different situations encountered during life.

The alarm: our body is preparing to fight or flight ...

When confronted with a situation perceived as stressful, our body reacts immediately by releasing hormones, including adrenaline. These hormones increase the heart rate, blood pressure, alertness levels, body temperature ... These modifications are intended to prepare us to react by bringing oxygen to the organs that will be called upon.

Resistance: if the situation persists ...

Shortly after the alarm was triggered, new hormones, including cortisol, were released. These hormones increase blood sugar levels to provide energy for muscles, the heart and the brain. Our bodies prepare for the energy expenditure required to respond to the stressful situation.

Exhaustion: if the stressful situation continues or intensifies...

In this situation, since the body is not made to remain under stress, it becomes exhausted over time. Self-regulation of hormones becomes ineffective. The physical and psychological problems caused by stress appear.

The impact of thoughts

The key to understanding our stress level is in the perception that we have of events that occur. Events that cause us stress may not be a problem for our neighbor. It is our perception which comes into play, and which triggers or not, our symptoms (physical-emotional-behavioral). It's our perception and our thoughts that keep the stress response going. However, certain techniques can help us to restructure our thoughts in order to act instead of reacting!

Symptoms (To overcome stress, it is essential to recognize our symptoms)

Physical symptoms: muscle tension • digestive problems • sleep problems and / or appetite • headache • dizziness • shortness of breath • fatigue • tremors or excessive sweating

Emotional and mental symptoms: agitation • irritation • indecision • worry • anxiety • lack of joy • melancholy • decreased libido • difficulty concentrating • low self-esteem

Behavioral symptoms: negative perception of reality • disorganization • difficulty

in relationships • absenteeism • tendency to isolate oneself • television abuse • increased consumption of tobacco / caffeine / sugar / chocolate / alcohol / drugs • avoidance of demanding situations

What is anxiety?

Unlike fear, which is a response to a definite and very real threat, anxiety is a response to a vague or unknown threat. Anxiety manifests itself when we believe that a dangerous or unfortunate event can occur and we anticipate it. Each person can experience anxiety to its own degree and intensity. His/her perception of the event will have a great influence on the intensity of the anxiety experienced.

During the PANDEMIC?

All these manifestations related to stress, anxiety and depression are normal in a pandemic context. Most people have the resources and the ability to adapt to this type of situation. First, count on your usual ways of adapting to difficult situations. Here are other ways to help you minimize the impact of these reactions in your daily life.

Short and long term solutions?

Get informed

Lack of information or conflicting information can increase these reactions.

- Get information from reliable information sources, in particular by consulting the Coronavirus page (COVID-19) from Québec.ca, the official site of the government of Québec.
- Beware of sensational news from unknown or questionable sources; take time to validate the information with recognized official sources;
- While it is important to be properly informed, limit the time spent looking for information about COVID-19 and its consequences, as overexposure can contribute to increase your stress, anxiety or depression reactions.

Take care of yourself

- Stay alert to your feelings, emotions and reactions, and give yourself permission to share them; express them to a trusted person or express them through writing, or physical activity;
- Practice a physical activity that allows you to relieve your stress and eliminate your tensions;
- Adopt healthy lifestyle habits such as good nutrition and sufficient hours of sleep;

- Limit the factors that cause you stress;
- Give yourself small pleasures (for example, listening to music, taking a hot bath, reading, etc.);
- Stay in touch with people who do you good;
- Remember the winning strategies you have used in the past to get through a hard time;
- Build on your personal strengths;
- Set your limits (for example, refuse a task that you don't want to do and that isn't essential);
- Learn to delegate and accept help from others (for example, asking children to do the dishes).

When does it become necessary to seek help?

In general, it is possible to overcome reactions of stress, anxiety and depression. However, after some time (weeks or months), the discomfort may persist and worsen. The following signs may be an indicator that your condition is getting worse.

The presence of several of these signs may demonstrate that your personal resources do not allow you to manage your concerns on a daily basis. It could then be beneficial for you to seek help.