

9.24.2020



For more than six months, we have been living in a reality that is characterized by constant change and uncertainty. Many are mourning the passing of family members and friends. Others are struggling to recover from the effects of the virus, and others are coping with the financial impact of lost income. And even those of us who have not been directly impacted by the virus are suffering from the grief that comes from missing the lives that we thought we would be living right now - the family visits that were cancelled, the life events that were marked in ways that we never thought possible, the daily routines that have been changed beyond recognition. And the uncertainty remains: how long will it be this way? There is an accumulated sadness that weighs on each of us.

You think you're doing OK when out of the blue it hits: a vague uneasiness—a nagging awareness that something isn't right. You're waking up in the middle of the night or you're snapping at your spouse. You miss people, but you don't call them. Fear, loneliness, uncertainty, or some other aspect of the pandemic—and the changes you've had to make—is getting to you.

For most of the year, our stress-response systems have been on high alert. Even if you're not consciously thinking or worrying about these stressors, you're being bombarded with "this is not normal" danger signals every time you log in to a Zoom meeting, turn on the news or wait your turn on a carefully spaced floor decal while wearing a mask. Processing those signals drains your battery, leaving you fatigued, exhausted and numb.

What can I do?

- **Feel your feelings, and be compassionate with yourself.** Even if you are feeling fine in general, it is important for you to check your emotional health every day by asking, "How am I feeling? How is my mood? How is my energy? What can I do about it?" Honest conversations with friends, family or a therapist can bring invisible stressors to light and perhaps uncover strategies to manage them.

- **Exercise, eat healthy foods, and try to maintain a regular sleep cycle.** Be sure to exercise, especially outside - even 15 minutes can make a major difference in the way you feel. Keeping a daily routine is helpful for many. Be mindful and make a note each day of the things for which you are thankful.
- **Accept that you're not functioning at maximum efficiency.** Write down even simple to-dos that you used to juggle in your head. Take more frequent breaks. Set smaller, more manageable goals.
- **Find ways to be social.** Schedule visits outside with friends and family. Make phone calls and send cards. Schedule Zoom visits with folks in other places. Look for a safe way to volunteer your time or help someone in your community. See if you can find someone to be with in a "buddy system" and check in regularly with that person.
- **Do something you enjoy.** Watch a movie, listen to music, go hiking, or do some other pleasant activity. Take an online museum tour, do a puzzle, bake a cake.
- Talk to a professional, such as your primary care doctor, a psychiatrist, or a psychologist, or one of the organizations listed below. Many are doing "virtual" visits that allow you to talk with someone by phone or online.

If you are struggling, seek out support

It's not a personal weakness if you're having a tough time. If feelings of sadness or other emotions are too much to manage on your own, it's important to reach out for help. If you are not getting pleasure any more from things that you used to enjoy, if you can't get out of bed in the morning because it all seems pointless, if you are drinking more alcohol than usual/more than recommended daily limits or, if life seems hopeless, and especially if you are thinking about taking your own life or lashing out and hurting someone - you should seek professional help.

If you need immediate help, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following helplines:

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Distress hotline, 800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs
- National Domestic Violence Hotline, 1-800-799-7233 (TTY: 1-800-787-3224)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-8255, or call 911.

Local Resources for Counseling and Emotional Support		
Promise Place	252-745-9439	https://www.promiseplacenewbern.org/covid-19-services-resources
Pamlico Child and Family Therapy	252-745-7401	https://www.pamlicocft.com
StillWaters	252-745-4510	https://heartworksnc.org/counseling/counseling-still-waters
Trillium Health Resources, Greenville, NC	877-685-2415	https://www.trilliumhealthresources.org/index.php/for-individuals-

		families
NC Dept of Public Safety Victim Services	866-719-0108	https://www.ncdps.gov/dps-services/victim-services
Integrated Family Service Mobile Crisis	866-437-1821	http://www.integratedfamilyservices.net/services/mobile-crisis-management/
Promise Place: Pamlico Office	252-745-9439	https://www.promiseplacenewbern.org/covid-19-services-resources
Hope4NC Helpline	855-587-3463	https://www.ncdhhs.gov/news/press-releases/new-mental-health-supports-all-north-carolinians-including-health-care-workers
Hope4Healers Helpline	919-226-2002	https://www.ncdhhs.gov/news/press-releases/new-mental-health-supports-all-north-carolinians-including-health-care-workers

SAMHSA’s National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357), is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations. Callers can also order free publications and other information.

The National Center for PTSD has a free smartphone app called COVID Coach that includes mindfulness exercises, mood trackers, and other tools. Download the app from Google Play or Apple Store. (https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/COVID_coach_app.asp)

The Yale Child Study Center trauma section has developed information for parents and other adults:

- Understanding & Coping with Reactions in a Pandemic
https://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/communitypartnerships/cvtc/Understanding%20%26%20Coping%20with%20Reactions%20in%20a%20Pandemic_386176_284_28977_v1.pdf
- Spanish: Comprender y Lidar con las Reacciones en una Pandemia
https://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/communitypartnerships/cvtc/Comprender%20y%20Lidiar%20con%20las%20Reacciones%20en%20una%20Pandemia_386175_284_28977_v1.pdf
- Helping Children Cope with the COVID-19 Pandemic
https://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/communitypartnerships/cvtc/Parents%20Guide-Helping%20Children%20Cope%20with%20COVID-19%20Pandemic-FINAL%20VERSION_386421_284_28977_v1.pdf

- Spanish: Cómo Ayudar a los Niños a Lidar con la Pandemia de COVID-19

https://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/communitypartnerships/cvtc/Gui%C3%ACa%20para%20Padres-Co%C3%ACmo%20Ayudar%20a%20los%20Ni%C3%9Eos%20a%20Lidar%20con%20la%20Pandemia%20de%20COVID-19_386555_284_28977_v3.pdf

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The COVID-19 Community Task Force (CCTF) is a volunteer organization established to engage the community in responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic and to support and augment the County's efforts. The information shared by the CCTF is not an official communication from Pamlico County, its Health Department or the Pamlico County COVID19 Task Force.