

3.11.2021



For almost a year, we have been living with 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 still others are coping with the financial impact of lost income. And even those of us who have not been infected 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. There is an accumulated sadness that weighs on each of us. Development of vaccines promises to bring the virus under control in the near future, but in the meantime, about 4 in 10 adults nationwide have reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder – a four-fold increase from pre-pandemic level, according to a recent report by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

This recent [study](#) from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that

- Young adults have been especially hard hit. Those ages 18-24 are about twice as likely as all adults to report new or increased substance use (25% vs. 13%) or recent suicidal thoughts (26% vs. 11%).
- More women than men are facing mental health challenges. During the pandemic, women have been more likely to report symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder (47% vs. 38%).
- People experiencing job or income losses are at higher risk for mental health problems. Adults in households that experienced job losses or reduced incomes report higher rates of mental health symptoms than other households (53% vs. 32%).
- Essential workers face greater challenges than other workers. Essential workers, who work outside their homes where they could be exposed to COVID-19, are more likely than non-essential workers to report symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder (42% vs. 30%), increased or new substance use (25% vs. 11%), or recent suicidal thoughts (22% vs. 8%).

- Communities of color are disproportionately affected. Non-Hispanic Black adults (48%) and Hispanic or Latino adults (46%) are more likely to report symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder than White adults (41%).

What can I do?

- **Examine 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. Try to avoid being too hard on yourself – what you are feeling is a normal reaction to this unusual situation.
- **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. Try to eat healthy, well balanced meals. Get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and caffeine before bedtime. 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 can help organize your thinking. Take more frequent breaks than usual. Set smaller, more manageable goals. Give yourself extra time to get things done.
- **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. Indulge in your joys!
- **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. A simple online search will point you to many “relaxation” and online “mental health chat” applications. See the resources list below for some suggestions.

If you are struggling, seek out support

It is not a personal weakness if you’re having a tough time. Each of us has experienced loss of some sort in this past year. If feelings of sadness or other emotions are too much to manage on your own, **it is 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 or more than the recommended daily limits, if life seems hopeless, and **especially if you are thinking about hurting yourself or taking your own life, or lashing out and hurting someone else-** 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/
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)

References:

<https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>
<https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/adults-reporting-symptoms-of-anxiety-or-depressive-disorder-during-covid-19-pandemic/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>
<http://www.gcumm.org/news/disaster-fatigue/>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html> Try to

COVID-19 COMMUNITY TASK FORCE

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.