

Mental Wellness FAQ

Loneliness | Anxiety | Feeling Overwhelmed | Depression

I feel so *out of sorts*. Does that mean I am clinically depressed because of COVID-19?

- Not necessarily!
- If you were vulnerable to anxiety or depression before the pandemic, it may be slightly worse now.
- We all may be experiencing some degree of depression at this time, with such an unknown and difficult time.
- Think about the coping strategies you have used or considered before. Make sure to try a few now and discover what might work to move you through and out of the *blues*.
- Sometimes, feeling out of sorts is our subconscious brain giving us a nudge to try some new things, like connecting to others, getting a bit more daylight or nature time, or taking self-care a little more seriously.

Sometimes life seems to be changing so much, I don't know how to respond or what to take on first. I just feel frozen in place.

- Be intentional about what steps to take first and how to spend your time. Name your goal for the day, the hour, the week.
- Prioritize.
- Make a list, if you tend to be a list maker.
- Choose one thing to take on at a time. If that thing seems too big, break it down. Any progress is great progress!
- Pick one thing to focus on at a time.
- Eventually you will work up to having a collection of changes, just like saving a little bit here and there creates a savings account.

I want to try to *get on with my life*, but am so afraid to be out of the house. What do I do?

- Start small. Do something which would feel like a *first* challenge to you:
 - Go out on your porch for a few minutes.
 - Walk to the mailbox to get your mail.
 - Stand in your backyard for a few minutes to get some fresh air.
 - Give yourself credit for any small step you take!

Having time alone doesn't usually bother me, but this loneliness I feel now is like a heavy blanket. What can I do?

- Everyone is different!
- Usually spending time alone is a choice, but these days it may not seem that way.
- Try to make connections, at a level which is comfortable to you:
 - Say *hello* to a neighbor or someone you pass at the grocery store.
 - Take a walk in a park.
 - Call a friend or mail a card to a friend or family member.

**This is the first time I've experienced feelings of anxiety or depression.
How do I handle these feelings?**

- Put it into perspective.
 - Think of other times, when you have had shorter periods of sadness, grief, or anxiety. Remember that those periods of time started and ended. There may have been strategies you used then that you can use or modify now. The key is to try a new pattern.
 - Other times of experiencing anxiety or sadness may have been shorter (versus this long period of pandemic isolation).
 - What were some steps which helped in the past with shorter periods of stress or sadness, grief, feeling overwhelmed, etc.?

Feeling Overwhelmed | Guilty Feelings

I feel so overwhelmed! It may be from losing a job, too much news intake, feeling like I can't handle my day-to-day responsibilities, or constantly worrying about getting sick, etc.

- Limit your news intake each day.
 - Maybe turn it on in the morning for a few minutes, check your favorite online news source, or chat with a friend or family member about world events. Any of these are fine, but limit your time each day or week to help prevent being overwhelmed and fearful.
 - Consider the things in life you DO have control over. Make a list of choices you can make regularly. Realize that you control sleep, eating choices, contact with others, leisure activities, responding to health needs, communicating with family and friends, and so on.

Missing going to Mass has been hard. I feel so guilty for not trying to attend in person.

- If you really have been struggling or feel scared, keep in mind that Bishop Knestout has granted a dispensation at this time for attending Mass in person.
- Try to do what you can on your own:
 - Watch the streamed Masses online.
 - Read the daily readings on your own.
 - Seek out online Bible Study offerings, if you would benefit from them.
 - Watch spiritual or religious videos and online content, doing religious reading, and having spiritual and theological conversations when you can.
 - Take advantage of the parish FORMED account, to watch a large variety of spiritual movies and series online.
 - Take personal time to read the Bible and pray each day.
 - Know God is with you. Welcome Him each day in your own way!

How do I know what I'm doing is working for me? What are the signs of mental wellness?

- Can you identify these moments or areas in your life:
 - Joy
 - Sense of humor
 - Positivity
 - Improvement
 - Progress
 - Hope

Children & Teens

I consider myself to be a pretty good parent, but I wonder what to say to my children about wearing masks, washing hands, and not touching things. Am I scaring them?

- Inform your children enough to be aware of what they should know, depending on their age level.
- Empower them by giving them confidence in certain areas.
 - For younger children, let them have their own hand sanitizer to be in charge of keeping their hands clean.
- Be aware of what they see and hear on the news or from other family members, older siblings, etc., so you can help them understand and digest what is being heard and seen.
- Exhibit a sense of calm, confidence, and belief that you are providing a safe and secure environment for your family. Point out all the safety measures you are taking and remind your children you feel safe. (Any fears can be shared with our adult friends and should not be carried by our children.)

How can I help my child or teen have good mental wellness during this difficult time?

- Make sure they still get time to be a kid.
- Encourage them to go outside to enjoy outdoor activities, walks, fresh air, picnics, etc.
- Create a sense of openness with your children, so they will come to you with questions or concerns. If you are not getting any questions, don't hesitate to ask, *How's it going with you? I was wondering about you (for example) staying in your room all day. Everything okay?*

My kids are on the computer and in front of screens all day with virtual school. Should I let them play video games in the evening or have any screen time?

- School screen time is more structured and possibly even stressful, compared to other screen time. So it may feel completely different to them.
- Consider how much eye strain, headaches, and sitting your children might be doing or experiencing in a given day. Make sure to consider alternatives to screen time, such as interactive board games, reading a book, or outdoor activities.
- Every child and parent is different, regarding screen time. You ultimately should do what is appropriate or comfortable for your family and situation.

Seniors | Nursing Home Residents | Adult Children

Some married couples have been apart for five or six months, if one person is in a nursing home and the other has not been allowed to visit. If one person suffers from memory issues, he or she may begin forgetting the spouse or not understand why they are no longer visiting.

- A new normal with new routines can be established. Perhaps talk on the phone, video chat, and send notes, in lieu of our past in-person interaction. One person may be able to keep a journal or photo album of life beyond the nursing home to share by reading or video.
- Using family photos could help with memory.

Some seniors go out, interact with family who live elsewhere, while others only go out when they need groceries or gas and aren't around other people (or very minimal).

What is the balance?

- Try not to compare comfortability levels. Everyone is different and has a different level of comfort when it comes to being out and about or around people at this time.
- Don't push yourself too soon or too much.
- Take one step at a time.
- Everyone's health and immunity varies, as well, so some may be more comfortable going out at this time.
- Remember a balance means a little on this side and a little on that side. Trying some new steps, while keeping a bit of a comfort zone, is your best bet.

For adult children, many have become the only one an elderly parent comes to for support, to vent, or to discuss hardships during this time, especially if he or she is the caregiver of a spouse in a nursing home. This can be a huge burden and weight on the adult child.

- Although very difficult, it may be important for adult children to set some limits or time restrictions when it comes to how often or long a parent goes to them with problems, burdens, worries, etc. Share with your parent that you also want to talk of fun times, times ahead, and enjoy each other's company.
- Help the parent find other connections or relationships to help with this difficult time. As you know, you may not be able to be there all the time. Help your parent develop a broader base of support, even if it is not in-person support.