The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health

Mental Health Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Update
Question 1

What comes to mind when you think of Mental Health?
Mental Health Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Update

- The Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey from earlier this year shows the economic downturn has led to mental health issues and increased substance abuse in the U.S.
- The analysis also found school closures and lack of childcare had an even larger impact on parents with children in their home under the age of 18 who either have transitioned to working from home during the pandemic or have been required to go into work throughout the pandemic.
- This analysis also finds that those hardest hit by the mental health impacts of the coronavirus pandemic have been younger people and women, including mothers.

Source: KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (March 15-22, 2021)
Figure 1

Mental Health Impacts Of Pandemic Rose During The Summer; Has Remained At About Half Of The Public Reporting Negative Impacts

Percent who say they feel that worry or stress related to coronavirus has had a **major** or **minor** negative impact on their mental health:
Mental Health Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Update

- Nearly half of Black adults (49%), White adults (48%), and about four in ten Hispanic adults (43%) say the coronavirus has had a negative impact on their mental health.

- Smaller shares of adults ages 65 and older and men (including fathers with children in the home) say they have experienced mental health impact from the coronavirus.

- It is notable that some previous studies have shown that men, older adults, and Black adults may be less likely to report mental health difficulty and more likely to face challenges accessing mental health care.

Source: KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (March 15-22, 2021)
Nearly Seven In Ten Women Under Age 30 Report A Negative Mental Health Impact From Pandemic; Fewer Older Adults Say The Same

Percent who say they feel that worry or stress related to coronavirus has had a **negative impact** on their mental health:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29 year olds</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49 year olds</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64 year olds</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and older year olds</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** See topline for full question wording.
**SOURCE:** KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (March 15-22, 2021)
Three In Ten Who Know Someone Close To Them Who Has Died Of COVID-19 Say Pandemic Has Had A Major Impact On Mental Health

Percent who say they feel that worry or stress related to coronavirus has had a major or minor negative impact on their mental health:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Major impact</th>
<th>Minor impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone close to them died of complications related to COVID-19</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows someone who died of COVID-19, not a close friend or family member</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not know anyone who died of COVID-19</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: See topline for full question wording.
Worries About Getting Sick

• One potential contributor to negative mental health impacts may be the fear of contracting COVID-19 or having a family member get sick from the disease.

• When asked how worried they are they or someone in their family will get sick from COVID-19, some of the same groups that are most likely to report negative mental health impacts are also the most likely to report being worried, including women, and younger adults.

• Women, Black and Hispanic adults and younger adults among those who most likely to worry they or a family member will get sick from COVID-19.

Nearlly Three In Ten Mothers Say They Needed And Were Unable To Get Mental Health Services In The Past Year

Percent who say, in the past 12 months, there was time they thought they may need mental health services or medication, but did not get them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage among total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black adults</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49 year olds</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic adults</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29 year olds</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH income $40K-$89.9K</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH income &lt;$40K</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH income $90K+</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White adults</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64 year olds</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and older</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Question was asked among those who say their mental health has been negatively impacted by the worry or stress related to the coronavirus pandemic. Mothers and fathers are parents with children under 18 in their homes. Sample size for fathers who say their mental health has been "negatively impacted by stress or worry related to the coronavirus" too small to report among this group. See topline for full question wording.

Not Being Able To Find Provider, Cost, Are Top Barriers For Those Seeking Mental Health Treatment

What is the main reason you didn't get mental health services?

- They could not find a provider: 24%
- They could not afford the cost: 23%
- They were too busy or could not get time off work: 18%
- Their insurance did not cover it: 10%
- They were afraid or embarrassed to seek care: 5%

NOTE: Among those who thought they needed mental health services but did not get them. See topline for full question wording.
The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health

Public Health Policies To Combat The Mental Health Effects Of COVID-19
The development and dissemination of effective COVID-19 vaccines gives us hope for an end to the pandemic that has upended our lives. But vaccines will not end the mental health crisis that is emerging and likely worsening, particularly during the isolating winter months. The stress of the pandemic is leading to substantial mental health issues across the country.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that four in 10 Americans will struggle with mental health and substance abuse.

Another 11% reported having seriously considered suicide coupled with grief and loss from being separated from loved ones, losing people to the virus, high levels of uncertainty, balancing work and caregiving, and loss of opportunities or jobs, this pandemic has created a perfect storm for psychological distress.

Source: cdc.gov
Throughout the pandemic, leading public health organizations — including the CDC, SAMHSA, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations have released general considerations and resources addressing the mental health and well-being of both general populations and specific, high-risk groups during the pandemic.

In the U.S., some steps have been taken at both the federal and state levels to address the pandemic’s impact on mental health, but with mental health problems on the rise, key issues are likely to persist.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act

- Signed into law December 2020 – surpassing the $2.2 trillion CARES Act – was passed by both houses of Congress on with large bipartisan majorities in support
- Included about $4.25 billion in funding for mental health and substance use services
- Builds on existing legislative efforts to boost insurer compliance with federal mental health parity rules
- Designed to provide economic relief for victims of the COVID-19 pandemic especially minority populations
The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), a stimulus bill passed in March 2020, also allocated funding for mental health and substance use services, including a $425 million appropriation for use by SAMHSA.

Also included in the CARES Act was several provisions aimed at expanding coverage for, and availability of, telehealth and other remote care for those covered by Medicare, private insurance, and other federally-funded programs.

It also allowed for the Department of Veterans Affairs to arrange expansion of mental health services to isolated veterans via telehealth or other remote care services.
Looking Forward

• History has shown that the mental health impact of disasters outlasts the physical impact, suggesting today’s elevated mental health need will continue well beyond the coronavirus outbreak itself.

• Due to the financial crisis accompanying the pandemic, there are also significant implications for mortality due to “deaths of despair.”

• As policymakers continue to discuss further actions to alleviate the burdens of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be important to consider how the increased need for mental health and substance use services will likely persist long term, even if new cases and deaths due to the novel coronavirus subside.
The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health

Stress and Anxiety: What is it?
Question 2

Is there such a thing as good or helpful Stress and Anxiety?
Stress versus Anxiety: What’s the Difference?

• Stress = response to an external factor

• Anxiety = internal persistent feeling of apprehension or dread

• The coronavirus (COVID-19) is producing stress while also magnifying anxiety for many of us.

Source: MENTALHEALTHFIRSTAID.ORG
Stress, Fear and Anxiety

• Stress - A physical response generated by the nervous system to a challenge or threat, whether real or imagined, and from either internal or external sources.

• Fear - A full emotional response (physical state, psychological sense of doom, apprehension, etc.) when in a physical stress response reacting to an immediate threat.

• Anxiety - A full emotional response including the physical stress response before or after a threat or challenge. Serves as an alerting device of possible danger.

• Worry - The cognitive side of anxiety. Repetitive, circular thinking that allows us to go over something over and over - problem-solve or perseverate.
Stress

• Experts agree that a core component of stress is the perception of threat and danger. You’ve probably heard of the ‘fight-or-flight’ stress response as a reaction to perceived danger.

• Stress is best understood as manifesting in the body. It’s the racing heart, sweaty palms and funny feelings in our stomach we’re all familiar with.

• Dr John Arden, author of several books integrating neuroscience and psychotherapy, recently put forward the term “autostress” for describing what happens when our body’s stress response goes on for a long time.
Signs of “Autostress”

- Chest tightness and feeling like you can’t breathe
- Muscle tension, aches and pains
- Headaches
- Difficulty sleeping
- Restlessness and an inability to relax
- Heart palpitations
- Digestive issues
Review - Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

1. Know what to do if you are sick and concerned about COVID 19:
   • Contact a health professional before you start any self treatment

2. Know where and how to get treatment and other support services and resources, including counseling or therapy

3. Take care of your emotional health:
   • Taking care of your emotional health will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family
Review - Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

5. Take care of your body:
   • Take deep breaths, stretch or mediate
   • Eat healthy, well-balanced meals
   • Exercise regularly
   • Get plenty of sleep
   • Avoid excessive alcohol and drug use

6. Be available to unwind:
   • Try to do some other activities you enjoy

7. Connect with others
   • Talk with people you trust with your concerns and how you are feeling

8. Connect with your community or faith-based organizations

9. Keep looking forward – make plans for 6 months down the road
Anxiety: What is it?

- An organized response by which a person senses, evaluates, anticipates and responds to cues of threat or danger in one's internal or external environment.
- Anxiety is usually recognized through sensations, emotions, thoughts or behaviors.
- These indicators of anxiety act as signals to pay attention and cues for action to deal with the situation: whether to avoid, escape, problem-solve or act on the situation.
- This is a crucial part of the human instinctive system to stay safe and adapt.
Anxiety and It’s Natural Purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Sensations</th>
<th>Emotional States</th>
<th>Thoughts &amp; Perceptions</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased HR</td>
<td>Worry</td>
<td>Ruminating/Obsession</td>
<td>Withdrawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallow Breath</td>
<td>Apprehension</td>
<td>What if? Scenarios</td>
<td>Jitters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest Tightness</td>
<td>Fear, dread</td>
<td>Scanning for Anxiety</td>
<td>Talking Fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomach/headaches</td>
<td>Panic</td>
<td>Scanning for Threats</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responding to Anxiety - 5 Examples to Look Out For

It’s important to understand that you cannot control anxiety from occurring – this is your brain’s automatic survival mechanism. What matters is learning how to respond to anxiety helpfully, so that you don’t get carried away by it.

Here are five examples of what to look out for:

1. Threat Scanning
2. Catastrophizing
3. Hypothetical Worry
4. Emotional Reasoning
5. Fortune Telling
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Plan Your Information Intake
Plan Your Information Intake – Tools to Help You Manage Anxiety

• Key Coronavirus Facts
• Trusted News Sources
• Uplifting News Sources
Controlling Your Information Intake

• The media is fully aware that our brains are built to fixate on threat, uncertainty and negativity – and they capitalize on it. Most news sources are negatively biased, sensationalist and speculative in order to win your attention.

• Anxiety is easily fueled by consuming this kind of information. To reduce anxiety, it’s important to be aware of and take control over your information intake.
Key Coronavirus Facts

- If you’re prone to catastrophizing, you may find it helpful to redirect your attention to the facts:
- Most people only experience relatively mild symptoms
- Coronavirus is fatal in about two to three percent of cases

Health advice for the public is as follows:
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds especially
- After coughing or sneezing
- Before, during and after you prepare food
- When caring for the elderly or sick
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers as a substitute for washing your hands but do so sparingly.
- Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between yourself and anyone who is coughing, or sneezing
- Cover your coughs and sneezes and throw your tissue into a closed bin immediately after use
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Frequently disinfect surfaces, like your desk, phone, tablet, smartphone, and countertops
To reduce anxiety, it is recommended checking trusted news source once per day. It is also recommended balancing out information intake with uplifting news sources.

• Which news sources will you use and when will you read them?

• How else can you limit your exposure to anxiety-provoking news?
  • Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories including those on social media
FIVE TIPS to Help You Practice RESILIENCE in 2021

- TIP 1  Be open to changes and allow for flexibility.
- TIP 2  Keep things in perspective.
- TIP 3  Take care of yourself with activities you enjoy.
- TIP 4  Prioritize your relationships.
- TIP 5  Ask for help if you need it.
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Outside My Control/Within My Control - Activity
Outside My Control/Within My Control

• If you’re prone to hypothetical worry (i.e., the ‘what if?’ thoughts), you may find it helpful to practice noticing these thoughts and then redirecting your attention to things within your control.

• Research shows that when we shift our focus to what we can control, we see meaningful and lasting differences in our wellbeing, health, and performance.

• So, write down what you have control over inside the circle below. Then, note the things you cannot control outside of the circle, using the table below.
Resources

- www.cdc.gov
- https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/
Within My Control

Outside My Control
Final Thoughts

The development and distribution of effective COVID-19 vaccines gives us hope for an end to the pandemic that has upended our lives. But vaccines will not end the mental health crisis that is emerging and likely worsening, particularly during the isolating winter months. The stress of the pandemic is leading to substantial mental health issues across the country. Coupled with grief and loss from being separated from loved ones, losing people to the virus, high levels of uncertainty, balancing work and caregiving, and loss of opportunities or jobs, this pandemic has created a perfect storm for psychological distress.
Thank you