



by Select Rehabilitation

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# Healthy Living Series

June 2020  
Trauma Informed Care During the  
COVID-19 Crisis

*Resources for Residents, Caregivers and Staff*

## Trauma Informed Care During the COVID-19 Crisis

In the news, we hear a great deal of ambiguity about the characteristics of COVID-19 and its scope and impact. For some people, this may lead to significant and understandable emotional and physical distress about the pandemic and its impact on the person, their families, and their communities. Our response to COVID-19 is individualized for different members of our community. Staff and care providers should acknowledge the uncertainty about COVID-19 and help individuals understand that there is often a social and emotional component to potential health concerns. Trauma-informed Care is an approach to address the strain in our lives caused by the COVID-19.

**What is Trauma Informed Care (TIC)?** TIC is a way to approach individuals that is grounded in an understanding of the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for individuals. TIC creates opportunities for individuals to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment in their lives. TIC means treating a whole person, taking into account past trauma and the resulting coping mechanisms when attempting to understand behaviors and treat the individual. In TIC, people need to be aware that trauma is extensive and permeates the lives of many individuals. TIC seeks to change the way we view illness paradigm from asking, "What's wrong with you?" to, "What has happened to you?"

### What are the signs and symptoms that an individual has experienced trauma?

- Psychological Stress
  - Intrusive imagery of trauma: nightmares, flooding, flashbacks
  - Somatic issues: sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal distress, heart palpitations, etc.,
  - Addictive/compulsive behaviors: substance abuse, compulsive eating, etc.
  - Impaired functioning: decreased ability to engage in self-care, isolation and alienation
- Cognitive Shifts
  - Heightened sense of vulnerability
  - Bitterness or cynicism
- Relational disturbances
  - Decreased intimacy and trust in personal/professional relationships
  - Distancing or detachment



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**How can rehabilitation help?** The purpose of therapy is to increase an individual's ability to live as independently as possible in the community while engaging in meaningful and productive life roles. Because therapy facilitates participation and is client-centered, it plays an important role in the success of those living with trauma. Your rehab team can provide educational programs and treatment to address self-awareness, interpersonal and social skills, stress management, and role development. Your rehab team can provide clients the opportunity to achieve their highest level of self-performance in functional skills. Your rehab team can provide clients purposeful activities according to capabilities. Consult your rehab team today if you are concerned that you or your loved one may be dealing with trauma intensified by the COVID-19 crisis.

## Trauma Informed Care During the COVID-19 Crisis

For most people, COVID-19 will be associated with increased uncertainty and stress. When we are under stress, we are more likely to trigger the “fight or flight” responses in our brain. For some, this may mean difficulty with organizing tasks. For others, it may mean difficulty managing emotional responses or it may mean difficulty making decisions. How we respond to COVID-19 is individualized. How should we as a community care for each other? How will our future interactions be affected by what we are currently experiencing? This month’s Healthy Living Series will focus on using a trauma-informed approach to address the strain in our lives caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **What is Trauma Informed Care (TIC)?**

- TIC is a way to approach individuals that is grounded in an understanding of the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.
- TIC means treating a whole person, taking into account past trauma and the resulting coping mechanisms when attempting to understand behaviors and treat the individual.
- In TIC, healthcare providers and staff need to be aware that trauma is extensive and permeates the lives of many individuals.
- TIC seeks to change the way we view illness paradigm from asking, "What's wrong with you?" to, "What has happened to you?"
- Lack of understanding can lead to judgmental attitudes, re-victimization, stereotypes, and victim blame.

### **What are the signs and symptoms that an individual has experienced trauma?**

- Psychological Stress
  - Distressing emotions: grief, depression, anxiety, dread, fear, rage, shame
  - Intrusive imagery of trauma: nightmares, flooding, flashbacks
  - Numbing or avoidance: avoidance of working with traumatic material
  - Somatic issues: sleep disturbances, headaches, gastrointestinal distress, heart palpitations, chronic physiological arousal
  - Addictive/compulsive behaviors: substance abuse, compulsive eating,
  - compulsive working
  - Impaired functioning: missed or canceled appointments, decreased ability to engage in self-care, isolation and alienation

- Cognitive Shifts
  - Chronic suspicion about others
  - Heightened sense of vulnerability
  - Extreme sense of helplessness or exaggerated sense of control over others or situations
  - Bitterness or cynicism
  - Feeling victimized
- Relational disturbances
  - Decreased intimacy and trust in personal/professional relationships
  - Distancing or detachment

### **Are there specific individuals that are more at risk during this period?**

- While not everyone has a history of exposure to trauma, individuals with identified histories of trauma may be especially vulnerable to the impact of significant changes in schedule, routine and expectations that come with social distancing, canceled activities, etc.
- Individuals at greatest risk right now include:
  - People who have anxiety;
  - Individuals who have depression or suicidal ideation;
  - People whose families may have lost jobs or income;
  - Individuals who have loved ones particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus;
  - People who have a caregiver who is a healthcare worker or in another occupation where they are exposed to the virus or are being asked to respond in an intense way.

### **What are the key principles of a trauma-informed approach?**

- Safety
  - Staff and individuals should feel safe, physically and psychologically
  - All interactions with individuals should promote a sense of safety
  - Understanding the individual's definition of safety is a high priority
- Trustworthiness and Transparency
  - Being transparent fosters trust and creates a sense of value and belonging for staff.
  - To grow trust, a trauma informed response includes:
    - Communicating regularly. Clear, direct, and frequent communication will help put anxious individuals at ease. Regular updates are important.
    - Explaining "the why" behind decisions or practices. Individuals will feel less worried if they understand why decisions were made.
    - Conveying strength and sensitivity. During a time of crisis, individuals look for strength and leadership in the organization. However, it's also important to convey compassion and sensitivity. Individuals need to feel they are cared for, and when they do, this builds trust too.

- Creating a trusted source of information so that people don't need to worry about sifting through false information.
- Peer Support
  - Social support is key to an individual's ability to be resilient in the face of trauma and stress. Build on existing ways to connect or create new ones. A trauma informed response includes:
    - Supporting multiple ways for communicating, e.g., video conference, email, phone or text.
    - Encouraging opportunities and methods for virtual face to face contact, e.g., zoom or facetime.
    - Setting up and supporting regular peer check-ins to connect.
- Collaboration Mutuality
  - Healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making.
  - The COVID-19 crisis is requiring organizations to think differently about how they conduct their work and provide services.
  - Given the tremendous needs and the huge numbers of people affected, it will be necessary to merge, expand, or collaborate across organizations. A trauma informed response includes:
    - Working together to create policies that promote shared delivery of services, and working to eliminate policies where shared delivery is hindered.
    - Initiating new partnerships and non-traditional collaborations.
    - Collaborating within the organization, across departments, teams, or sites to ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency.
- Empowerment, Voice Choice
  - This includes a belief in resilience and in the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to heal and promote recovery from trauma. This builds on what individuals, staff, and communities have to offer, rather than responding to perceived deficits.
  - This crisis will result in a loss of control and power for people. Soliciting input from individuals is empowering. A trauma informed response will include:
    - Providing choice whenever possible.
    - Listening to individual ideas and input about being trauma informed during this crisis.
      - For example, "Have you noticed something that demonstrated TIC?" "Have you noticed a moment that could have used a TIC approach?"
- Cultural, Historical, Gender Issues
  - This crisis will affect groups of individuals differently based on multiple factors, e.g., history, access to services, racism, and systemic oppression.
  - It's important to think about the people and communities who will be affected by our decisions. A trauma informed response includes:
    - Recognizing and building upon the cultural strengths of the populations you serve and/or live with.

- Ensuring intended and unintended consequences of decisions do not create harm for the populations you serve and/or live with.
- Being mindful of historical contexts for the populations you serve and/or live with, especially related to public health efforts.
- Using strategies that encourage engagement and minimize mistrust.

### **How should a community respond to trauma?**

- How a community responds to individual trauma sets the foundation for the impact of the traumatic event, experience, and effect.
- Communities that provide a context of understanding and self-determination may facilitate the healing and recovery process for the individual. Alternatively, communities that avoid, overlook, or misunderstand the impact of trauma may often be re-traumatizing and interfere with the healing process. Individuals can be re-traumatized by the very people whose intent is to be helpful.
- A community may be subjected to a community-threatening event.
- Trauma can be transmitted from one generation to the next.
- When explaining trauma-informed approaches, use language that reduces stigma.

### **Coping with Depression and Stress**

- Isolation, social distancing and extreme changes in daily life are hard now, but we need to be prepared for what may be an epidemic of clinical depression because of COVID-19.
- This crisis, and our response to it, will have psychological consequences. Individuals, families and communities need to do what they can to prepare for a depression epidemic.
- The following are some tips to help cope with depression and stress:
  - Reach out and stay connected
  - Get a daily dose of sunlight
  - Challenge negative thinking
  - Acknowledge worries and address any fears that can be handled
  - Do things that make you feel good
  - Talk with family, a friend or spiritual leader
  - Adopt stress management techniques, meditation, prayer, and deep breathing techniques
  - Avoid things that can aggravate the symptoms of stress:
- Caffeine (coffee, tea, soda, chocolate)
- Nicotine (smoking)
- Over-eating
- Over-the-counter cold medications
- Certain illegal drugs
- Certain herbal supplements

- Alcohol (While alcohol might initially help a person relax, it eventually interferes with sleep and overall wellness, and can even contribute to anxiety, depression, and dementia)
  - **Eat Well**
    - It's important to minimize our excursions to the grocery store to limit the spread of COVID-19. Consider online grocery shopping or home delivery options.
    - If you are set on doing your own grocery shopping, maintain a safe distance between yourself and others (at least 6 feet), wipe down surfaces with disinfectant wipes, avoid touching your face, and wash your hands before and after shopping.
    - With grocery stores limiting the purchase of specific items and advising people shop less often, eating well can be difficult. Purchase shelf-stable foods. Staples such as frozen and canned produce, beans, and lentils will keep longer and are easy to incorporate into recipes.
    - Pay attention to portion sizes. When we're cooped up inside, it's easy to overindulge. Try to maintain your regular eating habits as much as possible.
    - Drink Water: Staying hydrated is essential in life. Keep a full 8 oz. glass of water close at hand and refill it throughout the day.
  - **Be active**
    - Exercise is critical for both mental and physical health. If possible, take advantage of virtual workouts and the great outdoors.
    - Go for a walk.
    - Try a new activity like yoga, Tai Chi or Zumba.
    - Create an obstacle course in your living space. Include activities like sit to stands, and squats. Then challenge your loved ones to virtual competitions.
  - **Make sleep a priority**
    - Upon waking, get at least 15–60 minutes of bright light. Natural sunlight is best, or any bright or blue-enriched light source (e.g., light box, bright indoor lights). This signals to your biological clock that it's time to start the day.
    - Exercising closer to wake-time can signal daytime and improve sleep quality. Avoid exercise close to bedtime.
    - Use caffeine judiciously. It can help keep you awake when tired, but those effects remain for hours and can interfere with your ability to fall sleep. Therefore, try not to consume caffeine within ~6 hours of your desired bedtime. Also, caffeine may become less effective when consumed too often, which means it won't be as useful at times when you really need it.
    - Limit alcohol before bed. It may be sedating at first, but it disrupts your sleep quality.
    - Keep a regular sleep and wake-time schedule as much as possible. This helps keep your sleep and circadian systems in sync.



- Create a regular bedtime routine of quiet activities, like taking a warm shower, reading, brushing your teeth and ending with relaxation exercises, to get your mind and body ready for sleep.
- Limit alerting activities close to bedtime, especially light (e.g., screens), caffeine, and exercise.
- Optimize your sleep environment. Keep it DARK, cool, quiet & comfortable. Use eye masks or dark-out curtains, and turn your screens off to foster a comfortable environment.

### **How can rehabilitation help?**

- The purpose of therapy is to increase an individual's ability to live as independently as possible in the community while engaging in meaningful and productive life roles. Because therapy facilitates participation and is client-centered, it plays an important role in the success of those living with trauma.
- Seeking professional advice to analyze your unique situation; can often result in simple solutions.
- Your rehab team can provide educational programs and treatment to address self-awareness, interpersonal and social skills, stress management, and role development.
- Your rehab team can provide clients the opportunity to achieve their highest level of self-performance in functional skills.
- Your rehab team can assist in the development and instruction of compensatory and adaptation techniques to facilitate increased functional performance, attention and safety.
- Your rehab team can provide interventions to preserve mobility, socialization and ADL skills.
- Your rehab team can provide clients purposeful activities according to capabilities.

*For additional information, please contact your Select Rehabilitation Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapists. In addition, consult your rehab team today if you are concerned that you or your loved one may be dealing with trauma intensified by the COVID-19 crisis.*

## CARING FOR PATIENTS' MENTAL WELL-BEING DURING CORONAVIRUS AND OTHER EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES: A GUIDE FOR CLINICIANS

As our world becomes increasingly interconnected, the potential for rapid and far-reaching spread of new infectious diseases is a growing threat. Especially in the early stages of an emerging infectious disease outbreak such as Coronavirus (COVID-19), there is frequently a great deal of uncertainty about the nature of the disease, its spread, and its scope and impact. This may lead to significant and understandable emotional distress, even among those who have not been, and don't know if they will be, directly exposed to the disease.

During emerging infectious disease outbreaks, both

Especially in the early stages of an emerging infectious disease outbreak, there is frequently a great deal of uncertainty about the nature of the disease, its spread, and its scope and impact.

medical and mental health clinicians are likely to encounter patients who are experiencing various levels of emotional distress about the outbreak and its impact on them, their families, and their communities. Providers should acknowledge uncertainty about emerging diseases and help patients understand that there is often an emotional component to potential health concerns.

In addition, providers should consider the following recommendations for promoting patients' mental well-being during emerging infectious disease outbreaks:

- 1. Stay informed.** Obtain the latest information about the outbreak from credible public health resources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in order to provide accurate information to your patients.
- 2. Educate.** Healthcare providers are on the front lines of medical intervention and in a position to influence patient behaviors for protecting individual, family, and public health. Patient education plays a critical role in both containing the disease and mitigating emotional distress during outbreaks. Depending on the nature of the outbreak, this can range from education about basic hygiene such as hand-washing and cough etiquette to more complex medical recommendations for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Let patients know what you, your office, or your organization is doing to reduce the risk of exposure.
- 3. Correct misinformation.** In this age of social media, misinformation can spread quickly and easily, causing unnecessary alarm. If patients present you with inaccurate information related to the outbreak, correct their misconceptions and direct them to vetted public health resources.
- 4. Limit media exposure.** Today's 24-hour news cycle can make it difficult to turn away from the TV, radio, or news feed, but research has shown that excess media exposure to coverage of stressful events can result in negative mental health outcomes. Use trusted media outlets to gather the information you need, then turn them off—and advise your patients to do the same.
- 5. Anticipate and counsel about stress reactions.** Emotional distress is common in the context of uncertain and potentially life-threatening situations, such as outbreaks.
  - A good first step for mitigating your patients' stress is to acknowledge that it exists and help normalize it ("I see that you're stressed, and that's understandable. Many people are feeling this way right now.")
  - Teach patients to recognize the signs of distress, including worry, fear, insomnia, difficulty concentrating, interpersonal problems, avoiding certain situations at work or in daily living, unexplained physical symptoms, and increased use of alcohol or tobacco. This will help them become more aware of the state of their mental health

and head off distress before it becomes harder to manage.

- c. Discuss strategies to reduce distress, which can include:
  - i. Being prepared (e.g., developing a personal/family preparedness plan for the outbreak).
  - ii. Taking everyday preventive measures (e.g., frequent handwashing).
  - iii. Maintaining a healthy diet and exercise regimen.
  - iv. Talking to loved ones about worries and concerns.
  - v. Engaging in hobbies and activities you enjoy to improve your mood.
- d. If a patient is experiencing severe emotional distress or has a diagnosable mental illness, refer for specialized mental health care.

- 6. **Take care of yourself and your loved ones.** Healthcare providers are not invulnerable to experiencing their own emotional distress during outbreaks, and this distress can be compounded by caring for sick and distressed patients. Make sure your basic needs are met, including: eating, drinking, and sleeping; take a break when you need one; check in with loved ones; practice the strategies to reduce distress listed above; and monitor yourself for stress reactions too. Make efforts to ensure that your office and/or organization has a viable plan to monitor the course of the outbreak and take rapid and appropriate action if needed.

**Source of Credible Public Health Information during Emerging Infectious Disease Outbreaks**  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).  
<https://www.cdc.gov/>



Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress  
Department of Psychiatry  
Uniformed Services University  
4301 Jones Bridge Road, Bethesda, MD 20814-4799  
[www.CSTSONline.org](http://www.CSTSONline.org)

## PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF QUARANTINE DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK: *What Healthcare Providers Need to Know*

Quarantine is defined as the separation of individuals who may have been exposed to an infectious disease from the rest of the population to determine if they are ill and to reduce their risk of infecting others. During the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, quarantine has been used as a public health strategy to reduce disease transmission. COVID-19 quarantine efforts have ranged from the mass quarantine of entire cities in China, to isolation in government-run

Described here are the psychological effects of quarantine, as well as strategies for how healthcare providers can care for their patients' and their own mental well-being during periods of quarantine.

facilities, to self-isolation at home. While quarantine can broadly serve the public good, it is also associated with psychological challenges for those quarantined, their loved ones, and the healthcare workers caring for them. Described here are the psychological effects of quarantine, as well as strategies for how

healthcare providers can care for their patients' and their own mental well-being during periods of quarantine.

### Stressors of Quarantine and their Psychological Effects

#### *Stressors during quarantine include:*

1. **Frustration and boredom related to the isolation of quarantine**, which involves loss of one's usual routine (e.g., regular home and work activities, shopping for necessities) and limited social and physical contact with others.
2. **Inadequate supplies and access to regular medical care**, including food, water, or change of clothes as well as masks, prescriptions, and thermometers.
3. **Insufficient information**, such as lack of, or delayed, information from public health authorities, often due to poor coordination among health and government officials; unclear guidance; confusion about reasons for quarantine; and perceived lack of transparency.
4. **Longer durations of quarantine** (i.e., 10 days or longer), as well as extension of quarantine length.
5. **Fears about becoming infected and/or infecting others**, which can manifest as increased attention to and worry about one's health and physical symptoms, and may be particularly concerning for pregnant women and parents of young children.

#### *Stressors following quarantine include:*

1. **Financial loss**. Absence from work, healthcare costs, and other unanticipated financial burdens can result in socioeconomic distress, particularly among those with lower incomes.
2. **Stigma from others**. Stigmatization and rejection by neighbors, co-workers, friends, and even family members can manifest as being treated differently or with fear and suspicion, being avoided or excluded from leisure, workplace, or school activities, and experiencing stigmatizing comments. Stigma can be exacerbated if quarantined individuals are members of a particular ethnic or religious group.
3. **Getting back to one's "normal" routine**. Returning to usual work and social routines may take anywhere from several days to several weeks or even months. Knowing that it might take time to get back into regular routines can help with concern, anxiety, and frustration.

### Promoting Psychological Wellbeing During Quarantine

1. **Use communication as an intervention**. Clear, understandable, and practical communication can reduce adverse psychological responses and increase behavioral adherence. Provide rapid, repeated,

*Continued*

- and developmentally and culturally appropriate communications about the nature of the disease, the reasons for quarantine, and other essential information.
2. **Facilitate communication with loved ones.** Knowledge of loved ones' conditions can have a powerful impact on the emotional health of quarantined individuals and improve adherence to recommended quarantine. For example, knowing that loved ones are safe, healthy, and well-cared for can reduce stress, while increased stress should be anticipated when information is lacking or in cases of worrisome news. Before quarantine, allow sufficient time (within the limits of public health concerns) for patients to make arrangements, reassure their loved ones, and say goodbye. During quarantine, facilitate the use of technology (e.g., phone and video calls, social media) to keep loved ones in contact with each other.
  3. **Prepare for quarantine.** Households and facilities under quarantine will need adequate food, household supplies, and medications to last for the duration of the quarantine. Once quarantine is imposed, there may be limited ability to move about and shop as usual. Obtain necessary resources in advance of quarantine if possible, e.g., by making this part of a family's or organization's disaster preparedness planning.
  4. **Reduce boredom and isolation.** Planning for activities during quarantine can help reduce boredom and lessen the focus on symptoms and feelings of being isolated from family and friends. As above, facilitating access to the internet and social media is important to maintaining social networks and remote communication while in quarantine. However, media exposure should be monitored, as too much exposure and exposure to unreliable sources can increase stress.
  5. **Take care of yourself.** Healthcare providers are also vulnerable to experiencing the psychological effects of quarantine, and this can be compounded by the stress of caring for sick and distressed patients. Make sure your own basic needs are met, including: eating, drinking, and sleeping; taking breaks at predetermined intervals; checking in with colleagues and loved ones; and ensuring that your family and organization are safe and have a plan in place for possible quarantine. If you are likely to work with infected individuals, have frank discussions with your family about the risk to you and to them and steps being taken to minimize that risk. Plan for the possibility that you may be quarantined separately from them if they are not exposed.
  6. **Keep quarantine as short as possible.** When advising patients on length of time in quarantine, restrict the length to what is scientifically reasonable and take care not to adopt an overly cautious approach. In addition, do not extend quarantine length unless absolutely necessary, and if this occurs, provide patients with up-to-date information as soon as possible.

## Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS):  
<https://www.cstsonline.org/resources/resource-master-list/coronavirus-and-emerging-infectious-disease-outbreaks-response>

Brooks, SK et al. The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. *The Lancet*. Published online February 26, 2020.  
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30460-8/fulltext#%20](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30460-8/fulltext#%20)

## Healthy Living Series Talk Follow Up Form

We would like to know if today's topic has been a concern to you which may affect any activities in your day to day life. Please take a moment to complete this questionnaire and indicate if you would like us to contact you regarding your concerns:

<i>Please mark any areas of concern below</i> ↓	
<b>Daily Activities:</b>	I am concerned about:
Cooking	
Ability to Dress	
Housekeeping	
Laundry	
Shopping	
Hobbies	
Travel	
Church or Temple	
Medication Management	
Bathing/ Hygiene	
<b>Social:</b>	
Remembering appointments	
Going to Friends Homes	
Forgetting names	
Hearing	
<b>Self Perception:</b>	
Physical Health	
Fear of Hygiene Issues	
Fear of Embarrassment	

Please enter your name and phone number if you would like us to contact you:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_