

Your Mental Health and COVID-19

As humans, when we are threatened with or perceived to be threatened with danger, our natural response is fear. Fear is a normal and helpful reaction when we need to keep ourselves safe. Alternatively, fear may cause us to behave in some unhelpful ways, particularly if under stress for a long period of time. Some negative behaviors fear may cause are panic, use of substances to “self-medicate,” and over-watching reports of stressing situations. Fear, stress, and anxiety can cause us to feel out of control.

As the COVID-19 situation increases, many of us will be fearful for ourselves, others, and the future. There are some steps that we can take to help our mental health:

Rely on legitimate resources for information. There are rumors and myths that begin circulating when panic and fear set in. Make sure you are receiving accurate information, especially before sharing it with others. Utilize resources like the [CDC](#), [WHO](#), [MS Department of Health](#).

Set limits on the amount of news you watch about COVID-19. Only allow yourself to view information about the COVID-19 situation at certain times of the day. Consuming more information about the situation can make it seem uncontrollable.

Take care of yourself. Exercise, meditate, eat healthy, and get rest. Often when we are under stress, taking care of ourselves is tossed out the window. Taking care of yourself will not only help your health, it will help your resilience in dealing with the stress.

Reach out to others for support. In times of self-containment, we may not be able to physically surround ourselves with others, but we can continue to reach out by phone, facetime, and social media.

Keep a positive outlook and remain hopeful. Focus on the positive stories of neighbors helping each other, on those who have recovered, and that this situation is temporary.

Acknowledge the feelings you are having. Check in with yourself. Are your thoughts and feelings more negative? If so, talk about them.

Talk to your children. Children are perceptive and keenly watch their parents. Tell them the facts in a developmentally age appropriate manner. If they see you stressed, they may become stressed. They may become fearful of you leaving them, sad, withdrawn, or may even start bed-wetting. Be honest and help them understand what is happening.

Seek help from a professional. Reach out if the stress and fear is starting to affect your life in a negative way. You are not alone, and this too shall pass. Below are some additional resources.

Please feel free to reach out to the Mississippi Lawyers and Judges Assistance Program for assistance. My direct line is 601-948-4475, and my email is jcole@msbar.org. Thank you, Dr. Jessica Cole

Additional Mental Health Resources for The Legal Profession During Covid-19

Anxiety

To get free confidential, 24/7 support for anxiety, text “HOME” to 741741 - [Crisis Text Line](#)
[Science-based strategies for coping with COVID anxiety](#) - The Conversation

Office Management/Leadership

[Organizational Leadership and Managing COVID-19 Panic](#) - Forbes
[Tips for Working Remotely](#) - Fast Company

Panic

[Mental Health and Panic Associated with COVID-19](#) - The Star

Social Distancing

[Coping Mentally with Social Distancing, Isolation and Quarantine](#) - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Staying Mentally Healthy

[Challenges for Mental Health and Coping Mechanisms during COVID-19](#) - CDC
[Tips for Staying Mentally Healthy](#) - Change Direction
[Tips for Managing Our Mental Health in Troubling Times](#) - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
[Mentally Ill Online Support Groups](#) – National Alliance on Mental Illness
[Depression and Bipolar Support](#) - Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Stress

[Tips on Managing Stress Levels in the Office](#) - ABA Journal
[Coping with Stress](#) - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Substance Abuse Resources

[AA](#) – Alcoholics Anonymous Online Intergroup
[In the Rooms](#) – A global recovery community
[Al-Anon](#) – Al-Anon Family Groups
[Smart Recovery](#) – Online recovery community
[“The Addicted Lawyer”](#) – Brian Cuban’s blog with guidance and options for recovery meetings.
[Fear Not: Speaking Out to End Stigma](#) – Three-minute video on the importance of seeking help for mental health and substance use disorders

Suicide

Free, confidential 24/7 support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for oneself and others Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK; <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.