



International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP)

Briefing Statement: The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak

March, 2020

At the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) we recognize that these are unique and unprecedented times for the world. The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, a global health crisis, demands global solidarity. We must have empathy for all those suffering from the coronavirus and avoid all types of discrimination when it comes to this disease's origin and/or any individual who has contracted the virus. Open and honest communication and behaviour is required to delay the spread - only united can we fight this virus. At all times we remain guided by the expert advice of the World Health Organisation (WHO), National Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, our public health emergency teams and research institutions who are continually updating and advising our governments on the most effective approaches to contain, mitigate and delay the virus spread in our countries.

The sudden and constant stream of news relating to the pandemic can instigate and/or increase feelings of anxiety, worry and panic in all of us, especially among those living with a mental illness. It is important that we acknowledge this is a time of uncertainty, but also know that it will pass. Ensure that you are reading accurate facts and information from reputable sources to avoid misinformation that can lead to severe anxiety. Talk about your worries, share your thoughts with others, and remember that most countries have national helplines that are a valuable resource that provide emotional support in times such as these. National crisis centres and helplines around the world are listed on the IASP website.

https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis_Centres/

We understand it is very difficult to stay apart from our loved ones, but as hard as that is, the experts have advised and we support the need to maintain a physical distance to stop the spread of COVID-19 at the present time. We recommend staying connected with friends and family as much as possible by using all the communication platforms available to help us access the human connection and emotional closeness we need, especially now. We cannot forget those who may not have access to telephones, computers, video chats or social media. It is important that we make sure those who are hard to reach are not left alone. Sometimes when we are feeling lost and helpless, the best thing we can do is reach out and help others. If you are in a position to do so, find out how you can be of service in your community. Altruistic behaviour such as running errands or picking up supplies for vulnerable community members promotes well-being and mental health for all involved.

Within the weeks and months ahead it will also be important that we prioritise self-care to protect our physical and mental well-being. Many of us are spending more time at home in quarantine and self-isolation which can take a toll on us. We must continue to practice our daily routines of exercising, eating balanced meals, staying hydrated and getting enough sleep. Also, we need to develop new routines at home and at work to keep up with regulations. Where possible, we should try to access nature and sunlight. Journaling can help us process and manage our feelings by exploring and releasing the emotions involved. Healthy activities such as cleaning up, reading a book, listening to music, cooking, practicing mindfulness and yoga are all activities that we can do in our homes that can help us to relax.

The World Health Organisation continues to issue recommendations and guidance relating to how we can protect ourselves from the evolving COVID-19. Up-to-date information based on hygiene and physical distancing guidance, situational reports, travel, media and technical advice are all accessible via the following webpage:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>.

Wider information and guidance on mental health considerations and preventing and addressing stigma related to COVID19 is also accessible from the following links:

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8
<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid19-stigma-guide.pdf>

We wish to extend our support and utmost gratitude to the extraordinary healthcare staff and volunteers who are working relentlessly on the frontline of this pandemic. They all need our help during this time, and we must do all that we can to support them. The efforts we are collectively making as a population are a true testament to international unity. At IASP, we are and will continue to send messages of hope and support around the globe. We need to be strong, resilient and steadfast in the weeks and months ahead. Together, we will overcome this adversity and thrive as a global community.

IASP Executive Committee

<https://www.iasp.info>