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OF THE COUNTY OF ERIE**



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Health



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PRIMARYCARE IPA
ADVOCACY. VITALITY. STABILITY.



WNY COVID Working Group

JULY 26, 2021

The pandemic and mental health

Many of us felt mentally unprepared for the challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is no right or wrong way to experience these intense stresses.

Some common responses include:

- Grief
- Survivor's Guilt: "Why am I ok and my family member is not?"
- Fear
- Changes in eating habits
- Nervousness
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Sadness
- Intense worry
- Feeling alone
- Anger
- Disbelief: "How could this have happened?"
- Loss of control

Some people may also experience:

- Relief
- Gratitude
- A sense of community and belonging
- Renewed Joy in life
- Deepening of faith

There is no right way to experience a disaster, and it can be overwhelming.

Simple practices can help:

- Acknowledge the difficulties you have faced. Say them to yourself or write about them.
- Write a list of your thoughts and feelings. Writing them down can make them feel more manageable
- Remind yourself that emotions, while powerful, are separate from you. They come and go like waves on the sand or clouds passing.
- Take slow, deep breaths when your emotions overtake you to help calm you physically and mentally.
- Movement of any kind can elevate your mood: walking, riding a bike, gardening, dancing, hiking, swimming, or practicing yoga.
- Take a walk in a park, by a lake or in the woods to reconnect with nature and the seasons.

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- Establish new routines to restore a sense of control. Dramatic changes in our daily rituals can be unsettling.
- As humans, we need social contact. Even if you don't feel you need anyone, connecting with others will make you happier and more resilient. Have a phone conversation, write an old-fashioned letter, do a virtual visit, or take a walk with a friend.
- Limit screen time.
- Moderate caffeine intake. Caffeine can intensify feelings of nervousness.

What works for one person may not work for another. Try these one at a time to find out what helps you. Think of this as building a Self-Care Toolbox.

There is no simple solution to recovering from such a significant and disruptive event as The Covid-19 Pandemic. Many people may find it helpful to get the support of a mental health professional. If so, please contact one of the following:

- Your Health Care Provider who can help connect you to a behavioral health specialist.
- Contact a Mental Health Expert directly. Value Network IPA has an extensive list of resources and a partner directory that can be found at <https://valuenetworkwny.org>. The Psychological Association of Western New York has a list at their website <https://pawny.org>. The VA Western New York Healthcare System has resources for veterans. Call 716-834-9200.

Call one of the numbers below immediately if you are experiencing any of the following:

- Thoughts of harming yourself or taking your own life.
- Thoughts of harming another person or people.
- Thoughts of using alcohol or other substances to manage emotions.

Erie County

Adults 18 and over: 716-834-3131
 Youth under 18: 716-882-4357 (882-HELP)

Veterans Crisis Line
 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1)

Addiction Hotline
 716-831-7007

Allegany County

585-268-9600

Cattaraugus County

1-800-339-5209

Chautauqua County

1-800-724-0461

Genesee County Mental Health

Care & Crisis Helpline: 585-283-5200

Niagara County

716-285-3515

Orleans County

585-589-7066

Wyoming County

585-283-5200 option 2

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255

Resources for Additional Social and Emotional Support:

Guide to Self-Care: <https://mindpeacecincinnati.com/wp-content/uploads/SelfCareReportR13.pdf>

Self-Care Assessment Tool: <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/content/dam/socialwork/home/self-care-kit/self-care-assessment.pdf>

Mindfulness and Meditation App: <https://app.wakingup.com/free-account>

Presentations and Resources for Self-Compassion: <https://self-compassion.org/videos/>

Collective of Low-cost, high quality therapy providers (in-person and virtual): <https://openpathcollective.org>

Hiking trails: <https://alltrails.com>

Note: Consider consulting a medical professional to see if there is a biological cause of your symptoms.

It's been a tough year. Be kind to yourself and remember that you're not alone. There is help available.

Signed:

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Buffalo Healthy Living is a media sponsor of the WNY COVID Working Group.

The ILI/COVID Working Group of Western New York was formed in response to local variation in approach to the diagnosis and treatment of Influenza-Like-Illness and COVID-19 in the region. It is a collaborative effort of hospital systems, academic departments, independent practice associations, and insurers. The logos and signatures on this document represent the organizations' support of this statement.

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