



SADAG offers tips to manage Anxiety & Mental Health during COVID-19

SADAG are aware that during this time many people might feel even more anxious or stressed. While we don't want to add any further to the panic or hysteria, we want to offer help and support to so many South Africans who feel scared, confused, anxious and overwhelmed. SADAG Helplines are a critical service to many, and since the development of the Coronavirus SADAG has received many calls from people who are already feeling stressed and anxiety.

COVID-19 is causing anxiety, panic and unrest across the globe with new guidelines and recommendations being published and changed frequently, its dominating press headlines, its all over the TV and radio, it is what everyone is talking about – it is hard to escape it. Everyone reacts differently to the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and it may be extremely stressful for many, especially those who already have a mental health issue, but even those without a predisposing illness feel stressed and anxious during this time – it is completely normal to feel that way considering the situation. Fear, panic and anxiety about the Coronavirus can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. It's important that you, the people you care about, and your community learn new ways to cope and manage the stress.

"It's natural to feel worried and overwhelmed about our safety and wellbeing. So if you're feeling concerned about the Coronavirus, you're not alone. Yet, for some of us, this concern can quickly grow into anxiety, even panic. Hearing about shortages of hand sanitizer, people stocking their homes with food, and the number of deaths worldwide only fuels this fire." says Clinical Psychologist, Dessy Tzoneva.

SADAG are providing support through:

1. Online Toolkit on the SADAG website (www.sadag.org) with free resources, online videos, reliable resources, coping skills, online tools and info on social distancing, self-isolation, etc.
2. Chat online with a counsellor 7 days a week from 9am – 4pm via the Cipla Whatsapp Chat Line 076 882 2775.
3. FREE online #FacebookFriday 'Ask the Dr' chat on Friday, 27th March 1pm-2pm and 7pm – 8pm answering all your questions on Mental Health.
4. SMS 31393 or 32312 and a counsellor will call you back – available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.
5. SADAG Helplines providing free telephonic counselling, information, referrals and resources 7 days a week, 24 hours a day – call 0800 21 22 23, 0800 70 80 90 or 0800 456 789 or the Suicide Helpline 0800 567 567 .

Helpful Tips to Manage your stress and anxiety during this time:

1. Maintain a daily routine as much as possible – get up, get dressed, create a to-do list, etc.
2. Reduce the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage – filter what you are watching, reading and listening to. Don't have

the radio or news channel playing on in the background at home. Learn what you can from these respected sources. Only check these sites at specific times of the day. For example at 8am, 1pm and 9pm.

3. Yes, the situation is frightening, it's frustrating, and you feel out of control. Acknowledge that and allow yourself specific time to sit with those feelings – and then make sure you focus more time on the things you can control and do. Create a list of things to do to keep yourself busy and active – even during social isolation. Make a list that you can stick up on the fridge or in your bedroom, make it public so the whole family can add ideas (such as reading books you haven't been able to get to for months, gardening, watching your favourite movies, do something creative like painting, drawing, poetry, listening to your favourite music, trying a new exercise at home, cleaning out the cupboards that you have been avoiding to do for months, etc.). When you run out of ideas – ask your friends and family for ideas. Do small things every day that you enjoy and help lift your mood.
4. If you take medicine every month, speak to your medical scheme and pharmacist to get scripts filled in advance or arrange for home delivery.
5. If you are really struggling to cope with the situation, don't be afraid to speak up. Call SADAG, talk to your therapist, create a WhatsApp or Facebook support group. Stay connected with people via technology – do more video calls, phone friends to catch up, etc.
6. Mute key words which might be triggering on Twitter, unfollow or mute accounts, mute WhatsApp groups and hide Facebook posts and feeds if you find them too overwhelming
7. Thinking positively during a crisis is easier said than done. One of the best ways to ground yourself is in fact, in science. Avoid watching or reading news or social media, especially fake news, where facts can become blurred and exaggerated. Listen to what acknowledged experts are saying about the virus. SADAG suggests only following reliable resources such as: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV, www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019, www.sacoronavirus.co.za and National Department of Health Whatsapp 060 012 3456
8. Discuss with family, friends and neighbours what you can do to protect yourselves and be there for each other. Draw up a plan and keep it visible.
9. Ask yourself what you can control – your attitude, your thinking, your home, caring for your body and mind. Focus on these things.
10. Make it a part of your daily routine to reach out to friends and family. Having a sense of connection and a feeling of community is essential for hope and healing.
11. [Read this article for 10 Quarantine-Friendly things to do during a Coronavirus home isolation.](#)
12. [Practice relaxation techniques to ease stress levels & help your immune system.](#)
13. [More ideas of Things to do whilst self-isolating.](#)

Living with a Mental illness and coping during COVID-19

For many people living with a mental health issue, the current situation may be worsening or intensifying symptoms so it is important to take extra care during this time with more support and self care steps to ensure your mental wellness:

1. If you have a compromised immune system or a medical condition you're worried about, speak to your doctor for more specific guidance on your treatment.
2. If you are in therapy, speak to your therapist about alternative or online sessions. If you have a scheduled appointment with a Psychologist or Psychiatrist, do not cancel due to fear of exposure. Call the practice and ask what their new protocol or alternative plans are as many are offering online sessions.
3. Avoid searching online, media sourcing or having conversations throughout the day around the virus as this will cause increased anxiety that may lead to panic. Again – filter what you are reading, watching and exposing yourself too, especially since it can be very negative and scary. Try to set specific times to check for updates – but rather spend more time that could be adding value to your wellness such as doing things that you enjoy, doing more relaxation and stress relieving activities.
4. Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions. If you feel overwhelmed, talk to your mental health professional, counsellor, family or friend. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.
5. Use online tools, online forums, helpful websites and online support to help you through this time – try a new app that helps to manage your sleep, or

provides mindfulness techniques, listen to a meditation podcast, etc. And if you need ideas – speak to a friend, ask your family or visit www.sadag.org.

Reliable resources

Find a credible sources below:

- Please keep in mind that we as a society need to avoid sharing fake news during this time. Help protect other a round you by sharing accurate news from: <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/>. and WhatsApp Support Line: 0600-123456.
- [Find the latest information from WHO on where COVID-19 is spreading.](#)
- The NICD is a resource of knowledge and expertise in regionally relevant communicable diseases to the South African Government, to SADC countries and the African continent. Click [here](#) for updates.
- [Advice and guidance from WHO on COVID-19.](#)
- [Addressing Social Stigma.](#)
- [Briefing note on addressing mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19.](#)

In the coming days and weeks, plans and strategies will change as the virus's course does. Our fear and anxiety will likely increase and our lives will continue to be disrupted. However, just as the country has taken the necessary precautions to ensure everyone's safety – by adopting some of the tips and tools above – we can make sure to look after our own mental health during this time too. In a world that seems pretty scary at the moment, knowing what you can do, can help you feel a little more in control of what is happening in your life today.

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you are struggling to cope, please call 0800 456 789 or visit www.sadag.org for self-help tips to manage Panic and Anxiety during this stressful time.

Regards,
SADAG Team

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