

Lesson 2

What Is Stress? Why is It Important to Understand Our Stress during the Covid-19 Crisis?

Beginning

- What were the main points from our last lesson/call/meeting?
- Did you complete any action steps since that lesson/call/meeting?
- If so, how did they go?
- Today's lesson is "What is stress? Why is it important to understand our stress during the COVID-19 crisis?". What do you know about stress generally and especially during this crisis?
- Why is this an important topic?
- Today we're going to talk about stress, learn why it is important to identify our worries, and why this is especially important now. Let's begin by discussing some important information.

Important Information

What is stress?

"Stress" is a term people often use to describe a feeling of pressure, strain, or tension. People often say that they are "under stress" or feel "stressed out" when they are dealing with changes, difficult situations, or losses. The Covid-19 crisis is one of the most stressful experiences affecting our day to day living.

Why is understanding stress important?

The amount of stress we experience is influenced by our life experiences, how we make sense of the current crisis and our personal and social resources and supports. Before this crisis, many people were struggling with managing their mental health, physical health and/or substance use problems. Others were struggling with financial difficulties and/or managing day to day hassles. Too much stress associated with the Covid-19 crisis can worsen symptoms and result in relapse.

Stress is often related to our real or imagined fears and worries. Some fears and worries are natural and understandable during a serious and potentially deadly health crisis posed by Covid-19. Sometimes our stress is increased when we let our fears and worries take over our thinking and problem-solving ability. We might find it hard to think calmly and take action steps to stay safe and regulate our anxieties.

By understanding and identifying our fears and worries and discussing them with our therapist, peer counselor, family member and other trusted people we are better able to address our concerns in a way that reduces stress and improves our problem-solving ability.

Discussion Point

How much stress are you feeling most of the time? You can identify how much stress you are feeling by using a scale from 1-10 where 1 means you are feeling calm and have little stress that concerns you and 10 means you are very stressed out in a way that doesn't feel manageable. A score of 5 means you feel anxious and worried but are able to calm yourself down and not let your fears cloud your thinking or disrupt your sleep and day to day activities.

1.....5.....10
Very calm Moderately Stressed Very Stressed

When do you feel most stressed out during the day?
What is going on when you feel most stressed out?
When do you feel most calm during the day?
What is going on when you feel most calm?

Let's Get Personal

Below are the types of worries that people may experience during this Covid-19 crisis. As you review the list of worries, check those that you experience. After that, select the top three worries that are the most stressful for you. Discussing these worries with your therapist, counselor or others you trust may be a first step in coping with the stress associated with your worries.

Let's begin by recognizing many of the common worries people are having during this time:
Are you experiencing any of these?

- Worries you will get sick
- Worries you will die if you get sick
- Worrying about other people you care about will get sick and perhaps die.
- Worries that you are alone and no one to count on if you get sick
- Worries about money
- Worries about having enough food to eat
- Worries about losing your job and how you will manage
- Worries that you have no one to count on to help you get through this crisis
- Worries that staying at home will put a strain on your relationship with your partner, children or other family members
- Worries about feeling depressed or frustrated because you miss the people, places, things or activities that helped you stay well.
- Worries about sleep problems
- Worries about eating problems
- Worries about being very irritable
- Worries about feeling a deep sense of loss of control
- Worries because emotional, mental health and/or substance use problems are getting worse

- Worries that you won't get treatment for emotional, mental health and/or substances use problems
- Worries about increasing use of alcohol, prescribed medication for pain or anxiety, or street drugs
- Worries about excessive eating
- Worries about decreased appetite or losing weight
- Worries about nightmares
- Worries about thoughts of harming yourself
- Worries about thoughts of harming others

List three (3) worries that bother you the most. You may find it helpful to discuss and examine these worries and find ways to address them in a way that works for you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Discussion Point

What are some ways you have tried to reduce your worries?

Have you considered asking if others have the same fears and worries and asking how they cope with it?

Important Point: In another lesson, you will have the opportunity to learn about and explore ways of coping that may help you better manage your worries, fears and stress.

Action Step

During the week, you might decide to keep track of when you feel most worried and when you feel most calm AND what is happening when you feel most worried and most calm. In this way, you can begin to develop a wellness plan that reduces worries and increases relaxation and calmness.

How will you track your fear/worry and calm periods during the week?

When will you record and write down what you are tracking?

This page has a weeklong schedule you might choose to use to track your experiences of high and low worry. If you choose to track your periods of worry and periods of calm, we can follow up during our next meeting.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6am-9am							
9am-12pm							
12pm-3pm							
3pm-6pm							
6pm-9pm							
9pm-12am							
12am-3am							
3am-6am							

Place an X in the box during the time period when you felt very worried
 Place a Y in the box during the time period when you felt calm and relaxed
 Jot down what was going on during periods of high worry and periods of calm

Ending

- What were the main points of this lesson?
- How do you feel about what we have covered today?
- Consider using this affirmation, or one of your own choosing:

AFFIRMATION: You might find it helpful to affirm (state out loud) your ability and motivation to apply what you have learned to improve your health and wellbeing.

I have the knowledge and determination to use what I learned to better understand stress and to make smart decisions about managing my stress. I am a worthwhile person who deserves to have the information I need to understand stress and stay safe and health