



Practical Tips to Manage Stress and Anxiety During The Pandemic

Presenter:

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Acknowledgment

- o We are facing both a health and social political crisis in our nation. Situations with Covid-19 as well as civil unrest are impacting us personally and professionally at local, national, and international levels.
- o The scope of this training will focus on managing and coping with the health crisis of Covid-19 as we explore concrete management strategies for well-being.

Covid-19 the Pandemic

- o Threat of illness/fear of contamination
- o Unknown risks
- o Search for accurate and useful information
- o Isolation and quarantine
- o Questioning of our own mortality and that of loved ones
- o Facing change – temporary and/or permanent

Physical, emotional, and environmental impact of Covid-19

- o Economic changes
- o Job loss and financial concerns
- o Separation/distancing from family and friends
- o Uncertainty
- o Heightened anxiety
- o Grief
- o Guilt
- o Confusion and indecision

Responding to the pandemic

- o *“There is no normal way to deal with what’s happening.*
- o *This has never happened in our lifetimes.*
- o *We cannot come together in the same ways we are used to so there’s no ‘normal’ way to respond or manage emotions.”*



What is stress?

What is anxiety?

Stress is a common trigger for anxiety

Stress

Stress is a response to an *external* cause, such as a tight deadline at work or having an argument with a friend and subsides once the situation has been resolved.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a person's specific reaction to stress; its origin is *internal*. Unlike stress, anxiety persists even after a concern has passed. In more severe cases, anxiety can escalate into an anxiety disorder, the most common mental health issue in the U.S.

Managing stress and anxiety

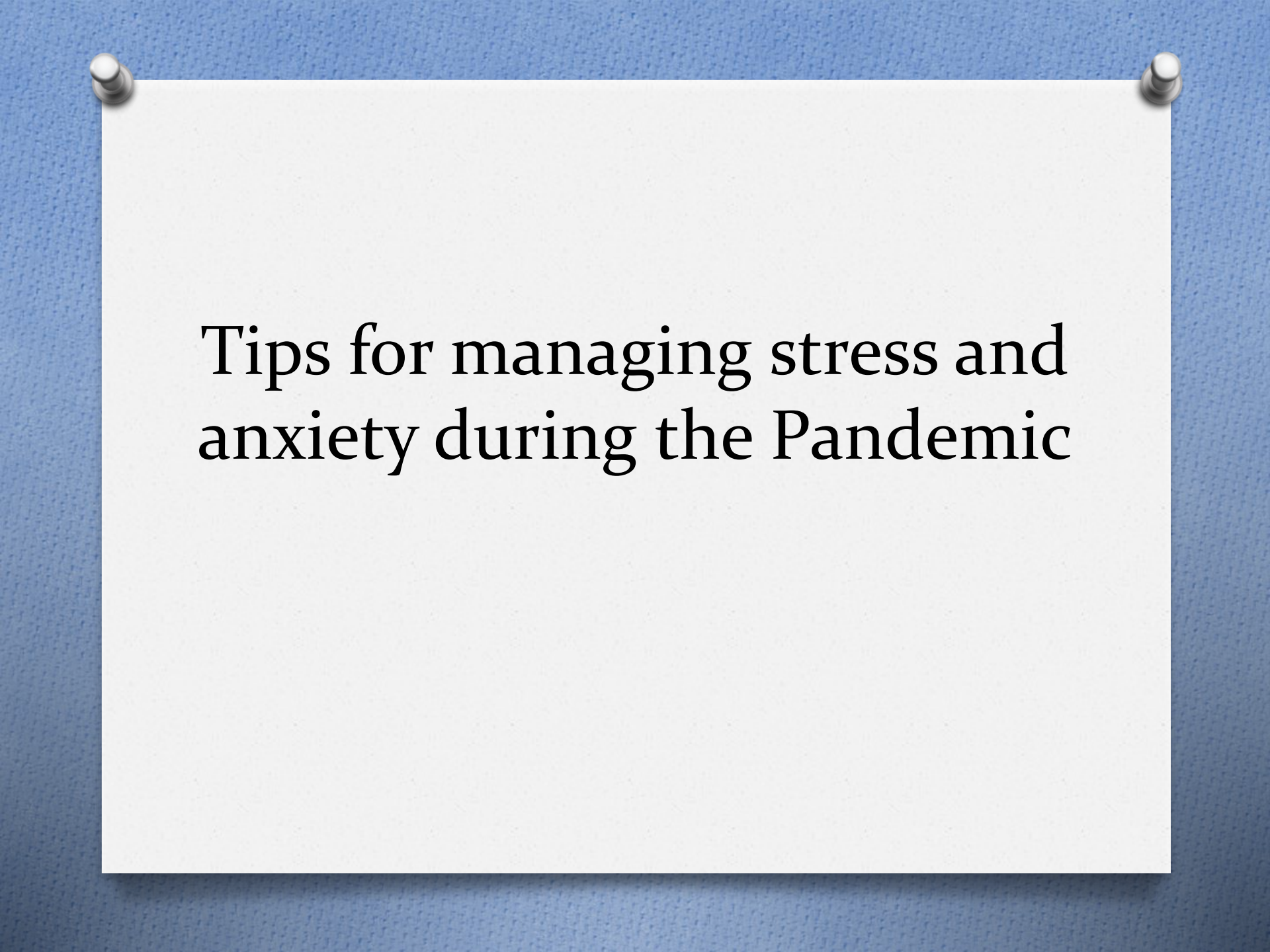
- o **Awareness:** identify the source(s) of your stress
- o **Practice:** states of mind into traits of character
- o **Acceptance:** of what is not within our control
- o **Self-care:** make it personal, specific, and change it up depending on your needs at the moment
- o **Challenge your thinking:** the most bang for your stress buck

Anxiety and Stress Concerns for Providers

- o Caring for others while risking personal safety
- o Following stay at home and social distancing mandates while still meeting job responsibilities
- o Working at this time while distancing
- o Being present for your clients while taking care of yourself

Some of the most impactful stressors of Covid-19:

- o Uncertainties and flood of unknowns
- o Health concerns
- o Loss of loved ones/death
- o Social distancing



Tips for managing stress and anxiety during the Pandemic

Mindfulness

- o Embrace your feelings
- o Embrace the moment and review successful coping mechanisms that you used in the past to cope with difficult situations
- o Allow yourself to let go of worrying about things you cannot control and focus on your own inner peacefulness
- o Slow down and think clearly about what you need
- o Embrace the mindfulness mantra of living in the present, rather than regretting the past or worrying about the future

Managing uncertainty

- o Follow a stable routine
- o Affirm that which is predictable in your life
- o Reminisce
- o Validate your past successes
- o Check-in with trusted people; check your reality and gain perspective
- o Practice mindfulness
- o Facing anxiety, fears, and worries in the moment will lead to less anxiety over time

Practice tolerating uncertainty

- Don't text your friend immediately the next time you need an answer to a question. Wait and sit with the unknown
- Don't check the weather before going out. Mentally prepare for coping with whatever happens
- Work on reducing the number of times you consult the internet for updates on the outbreak of Covid-19
- Accept anxiety as an integral part of the human experience
- Resist the urge to escape or calm your fears by obsessively reading virus updates

Control over the unknown

- o Identify what you can control
- o Consider what is within your power
- o Ask yourself the following questions:
 - o What is my **intention** at this moment?
 - o What **actions** would I like to take right now?
 - o How can I **respond** to the emotions that I am feeling now?

Coping with feelings of anxiety

- o Engage in activities that make you happy
 - o Cooking
 - o Listening to music, podcasts, watching television, playing on electronic devices
 - o Talking with family and friends
 - o Build, create, design, imagine
 - o Art activities

Cognitive management strategies for anxiety

- o Challenge negative thoughts
- o Check the reality of your thoughts
- o Is there evidence to support your thoughts?
- o Stop obsessing about what you have no control over and substitute the thoughts with what you can do
- o Create a plan to take action on what you can do

Stress Management Art Activities

- o Crafting
- o Coloring
- o Painting
- o Completing a puzzle and framing it
- o Knitting, crocheting, embroidering
- o Taking photos
- o Updating and organizing photo albums (electronically or in hard copy)

Stress and Anxiety Management Tasks

- o Brain breaks
- o Read stories and books
- o Talk to friends
- o Journal
- o Meditate
- o Spend time on thinking about things you do know rather than uncertainties
- o Hum, sing out loud, learn the words of a favorite song
- o Breathe, practice breathing exercises, abdominal breathing

Practice orientation exercises to transfer your focus from inside of your body to outside

- o Name five things in the room that are yellow, green, or blue
- o Look out the window and find the furthest thing you can see, the nearest thing you can see, the biggest, the smallest

Affirm your resiliency

- o Positive self-talk
 - o This is temporary, not permanent
 - o I am safe at this moment
 - o I am competent
 - o I do _____ very well
 - o I deserve to be at peace with who I am
 - o I am good just as I am
 - o I am doing all that I can for my well-being
 - o I can allow myself to let go of worrying about things I cannot control and focus on my own inner peacefulness

When to seek help

- o If you feel like you are going to hurt yourself
- o You feel like you are going to hurt another person
- o You feel unsafe in your own skin
- o You are having experiences of panic 4-5 times weekly
- o You are experiencing changes in sleeping, eating patterns, concentration
- o Increased and excessive use of substances
- o You feel hopeless and cannot identify hopeful thoughts

Resources

- o Reach out to family and friends
- o Clergy or spiritual advisors
- o Peers
- o Co-workers
- o EAP (Employee Assistance Programs)
- o Insurance providers
- o Self-help groups or programs

Resources

- o 2-1-1 or publichealth.lacounty.gov
- o Access Center (800) 854-7771
- o National Suicide Prevention Line
 - o (800) 273-8255
- o National Alliance for Mental Illness
- o National Institute of Health
- o Apps for consideration:
 - o Headspace
 - o Calm
 - o Mindshift

Final thoughts

- o Covid-19 has brought with it a new level of fear and uncertainty
- o Being worried is a normal reaction to crisis situations
- o Embrace the “new normal”
- o This health crisis will not last forever
- o Changes ushered in by Covid-19 are likely to change the fabric of societies all over the world
- o Humans are resilient and innovative and will adapt