



NEWS RELEASE

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March 24, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mental Wellness While Practicing Social Distancing

Sterling, Colo. – March 24, 2020: During the past few weeks the Northeast Colorado Health Department (NCHD) has repeated the messages about how everyone can help prevent the spread of the coronavirus including abiding by the public health order to practice social distancing, washing your hands and staying home if you are sick in order to keep our community healthy. However, it's not just your physical health that you need to be mindful of, but also your mental wellness as well. There are steps we can all take to promote our mental wellness during a stressful time such as this.

There is a lot of anxiety associated with COVID-19 whether it's an overall fear of becoming sick, to job security or even concern for loved ones. We are all feeling the effects of this situation and this stress can cause our immune systems to weaken.

Humans are hard-wired to need connection: seeing friends, getting together in groups or touching each other. Prolonged periods of social isolation can actually increase the risk for a variety of health problems, including heart disease and depression. Social contact can protect against the negative effects of stress.

While we practice social distancing to prevent the spread of an infectious disease, it may require some innovative approaches to ensure we remain connected to our friends, family and community. While live human connection is best, there are several options available to help people stay in touch during a time of quarantine/isolation including telephoning, texting, emailing and using free computer and phone apps such as Skype, Google hangouts and Facebook Messenger to video chat.

In addition to feeling disconnected, this situation is also an interruption to our daily routines. During this time of practicing social distancing, be sure to create and follow a new daily routine for both adults and children in order to preserve a sense of order and control. Take steps to maintain a healthy lifestyle including getting enough sleep, eating well, and exercising.

While it is important to obtain accurate and timely public health information regarding COVID-19, everyone needs to limit their consumption of media coverage. Psychologists recommend balancing time spent on news and social media with other activities unrelated to quarantine or isolation. Integrate some time for your favorite hobbies such as listening to music, painting, reading, woodwork, handwork, or even keep a gratitude journal. These healthy pastimes can provide a beneficial buffer to the stress of the current situation. Be generous and find ways you can help someone less mobile or with less access to resources. For example, if you are going to the store maybe ask if you can pick something up for them.

If you struggle with anxiety, depression, loneliness, substance abuse or other mental health issues, you may be particularly vulnerable. Contact your psychologist or counselor to see if they can continue normal sessions utilizing telehealth options via

phone-based or online delivery. If you need assistance, here are several counseling and mental health resources across northeast Colorado that you can access. For a list of local providers that are here to help go to: <https://www.nchd.org/behavioralhealth>.

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