



The Lexington Group, Inc.

Your Employee Assistance Program

COVID-19 and Long-Term Trauma

As 2020 comes to a close, it is likely that you are juggling the demands this year has brought. You may be working from home, temporarily unemployed, home-schooling your children, or have added responsibilities caring for loved ones. Large scale issues like illness, finances, and grief add an extra blanket of difficulty to everyday tasks and amplify problems. Faced with the new reality of living in crisis has resulted in economic downturn, housing insecurity, and recommended isolation, it is important that we look after our mental, as well as our physical, health.

Historically, we have thought about depression and anxiety as crises “other people” go through and make them completely nonfunctional. However, strain and its emotional impacts aren’t binary and effect everyone; you aren’t in complete agony or perfectly fine, most people are somewhere on that spectrum. Worries build up over time and can be addressed when you are minimally affected to prevent a larger upset in your daily life. Small changes in behavior and mood initially may not seem detrimental but left unattended may manifest into something more pronounced. Minor changes that may tip you off to a stress buildup might be: not answering a phone call from a person you would normally be excited to hear from, feeling lethargic during the day when you would normally be at peak energy, or not doing the dishes for a period of time. You might go about your day without realizing something is slowly wearing you down.

Fear, worry, and stress are natural responses to perceived or real threats, and at times when we are

faced with uncertainty or the unknown. So, it is normal and understandable that people are reacting or experiencing fear in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It’s important to recognize that feeling, name it, and remind yourself no one is having a normal year. Everyone is going through change in some shape or form and stress is a warranted response. Although negative feelings concerning COVID-19 are universal, know that there are ways to work on yourself to feel better.

Pandemics have a beginning and an end, unfortunately we are still in the middle of it. Collectively, we’ve hunkered down and shifted our lifestyles. You may recognize that it takes less and less stimulus to make you feel depleted, overwhelmed and stuck. However, our normal routines and coping mechanisms were not meant to carry us 10 months through a pandemic. Our favorite meals, watching TV, or picking up a book may not cut it anymore. Weed-out activities that are not helping and focus on ones that make you feel reenergized. Say no to social commitments you don’t enjoy, set boundaries for people adding to your stress, and limit your time on social media. Additionally, simplify your to do list and offload nonessential tasks. Responsible behavior is also making sure you are appropriately managing your time. You need more time and energy to manage yourself than normal and being aware of your capacity makes you a better caregiver, employee, and partner. Life isn’t always about production, so make those allowances for those around you as well.

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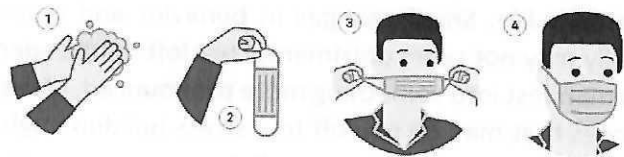
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For commitments you have to keep, give yourself credit for how much harder those tasks may be given the circumstances. Be proud of your resiliency for making it through this year even if you have stumbled. In an extreme circumstance you are making due and still putting effort into doing things for yourself. Add up those small tasks and remind yourself that these actions are meaningful. There's a certain relief to know that even if everything feels stationary and uncertain, time continues to pass and you are doing the best you can a to move forward.

Our brains are designed to thrive on stability and accomplishments. Dwelling on issues you cannot control or questions that cannot be answered leaves us unfulfilled. Take some time to evaluate things that are bothering you and what you can and can't change, especially related to COVID-19. Remind yourself you are not carrying the weight of other people's decisions and can't change the past. Stop asking: "Why do they keep...?", "Should I have done... earlier?", "Would it have been better if...?". Racing thoughts and spiraling worry overwhelms us to the point where we can struggle to respond in the present. Take time away from any news sources and find Covid information through simple sources that don't inject options. Read guidelines directly from the CDC or your state website, find out the percentage of cases in your town to assess

your risk. Do not expect yourself to be the world leading authority on COVID-19. Experts are doing that worrying for you, they collect all the information and make recommendations so you don't have to reinvent the wheel to figure out "how safe you are". Lean into what you can control, get organized, clean you space, file or scan old paperwork, donate untouched clothing, and do a digital cleanse by sorting files and apps on all your electronic devices.

If you are struggling and feeling overwhelmed, we understand it may be difficult to deal with that hardship on your own especially when our family and friends are also depleted. This may be an especially troubling time for marginalized communities, families living paycheck to paycheck, people struggling with substance use, and individuals with disabilities or health concerns. The Lexington Group is equipped to address these issues and connect you with someone to work through your concerns.



How The Lexington Group Can Help

The Lexington Group can help set up confidential Online or Face-to-Face Counseling. Caring and personalized help is at your fingertips. Request service and find out additional information at:

The-Lexington-Group.com

For 24/7 support call:

UNITED STATES & ENGLAND
1-800-676-4357

CANADA
1-800-567-4343

CAYMAN ISLANDS
1-855-328-1185

TTY
1-800-955-8339

