Don’t forget about mental health!

Are you feeling stressed, anxious or depressed? The following advice can help you to intelligently deal with events stemming from the coronavirus COVID-19 epidemic here in Québec.

How do these problems manifest themselves?

1. Physical symptoms
   - Headaches, neck tension, digestive problems
   - Sleep problems
   - Loss of appetite

2. Psychological and emotional symptoms
   - Worries and sense of insecurity
   - Feeling overwhelmed by events
   - Negative views of things or daily events
   - Discomfort, sadness or anger

3. Behavioural symptoms
   - Difficulty concentrating
   - Irritability, aggression
   - Isolation, withdrawal from others
   - Increased use of alcohol, drugs and medication

How do you succeed in adapting?

Take good care of yourself when you are in preventive isolation. Stay in touch with your close friends and family by telephone or Internet. Pay attention to your feelings and talk about them with someone you trust while always abiding by social distancing recommendations. Speak with a friend and ask for help when you feel overwhelmed. It isn’t a sign of weakness but strength when you do what is necessary to get through it. Physical activity will also help to release tension.

Give yourself moments of pleasure by listening to music or taking a warm bath if it will lower stress. Counting on your own strengths will help you to surf over the hard times.

What to do when distressed?

When this unusual situation seems never-ending, your emotional reaction can become sharper. For example, you may feel greater fatigue, become overwhelmed by fear, have more trouble accomplishing your daily tasks or fear a greater risk of contagion. Pay attention to these signs of trouble ahead and, as soon as possible, reach out to the resources that are available to help.

Managing time at home or when teleworking

• Set aside some time each day for family activities. Play board games, read out loud, go for a walk applying distancing measures, etc.
• Speak with your workmates by phone or chat at nap time.
• Suggest your children work just for family activities. Play board games, read out loud, go for a walk applying distancing measures, etc.
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Experiencing financial worries?

Increased stress related to financial insecurity can also arise during a pandemic. Loss of employment and income are a major source of anxiety for everyone, but it can become worse when we are in isolation. Many websites exist that offer help, such as the Québec.ca/coronavirus government site. The following website can also provide general assistance: emetalsahealth.ca

What to do?

• Keep control of your emotions. For example, you might go into the bedroom by yourself to calm down.
• Teach your child basic personal hygiene, such as how to wash hands properly.
• Reassure and spend more time with your child.
• Have your child take part in household preventive tasks.
• Maintain your usual habits and schedules or create new ones for safe play and relaxation.

Other ways to better manage your stress or anxiety as a family

While obtaining the right information is important, put limits on time spent seeking information about COVID-19. Information overload can raise the stress level, making you more anxious or even depressed.

Use the information you already have to plan what comes next. Set aside specific times for updates once or twice a day.

Avoid sources of sensational news and doubtful information. This will help separate fact from rumour.

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• Speak with your workmates by phone or chat at nap time.

Resources

For stress, anxiety or depression about the progression of the current situation in Québec, call Services Québec at 1 866 644-4454 or toll free at 1 877 644-4454. The person that answers your call will provide more information and you will be directed to a psychosocial professional who can provide the additional support and advice you need.

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• Tel-Aide listening centre provides help 24/7 to people suffering from solitude, distress or who need to have someone listen. 514 235-1021 (French)
• Écoute étrange is a community organization that supports people who are emotionally suffering. 514 278-2302 or 1 866 509-0101 (French)
• Quebec.ca/coronavirus website.

Resources for better management of anxiety:

• Living better with your child: helping with anxiety (French)
• ecobranches.com (site that explains COVID-19 to children and why schools are closed, how vaccine is made, etc. [French]
• centrefin.education.ca (French)
• railmetsgnd.com (French)
• Quebec.ca/coronavirus website.

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