

Mental Health and COVID-19



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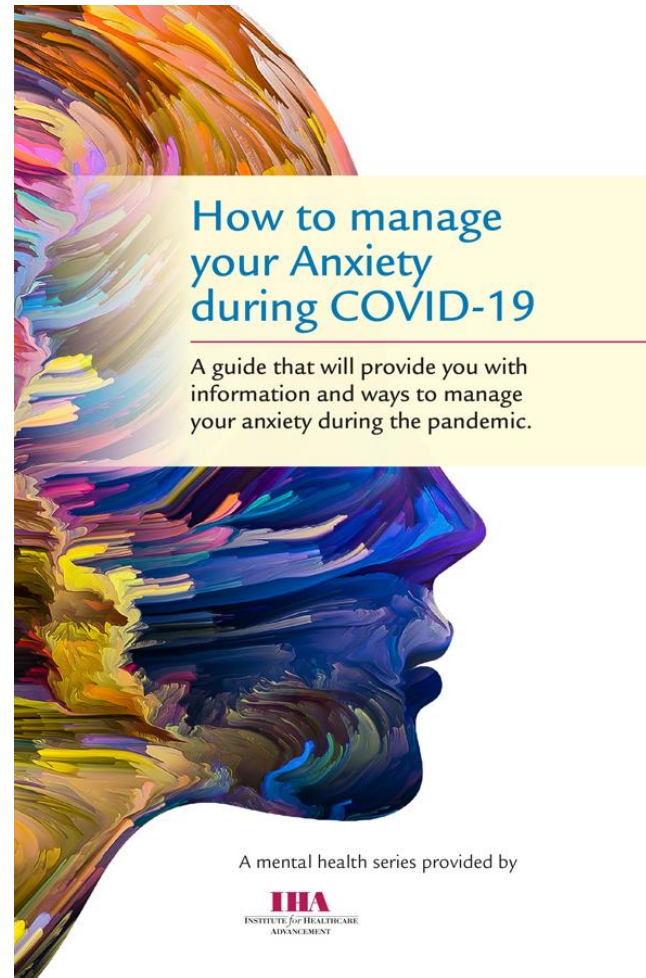
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Mental Health and COVID-19 Series





Mental Health and COVID-19: Clear the confusion, combat the misinformation and ease the fear through communication

- Explain how the pandemic's impact on mental health can create additional health literacy barriers
- Identify how mental health symptoms such as depression, anxiety and trauma impact health literacy skills needed to follow public health guidelines
- Identify how low health literacy levels can impact COVID-19 patients, their families and their medical providers
- Learn what health educators can do to help medical professionals identify and intervene when mental health issues impact health literacy issues

The COVID-19 pandemic as of Thursday, Jan. 21

- Global Deaths: 2,088,392
- U.S. Confirmed Cases: 24,619,597
- U.S. Deaths: 409,877
- And since updating these slides yesterday evening ...[here](#) is where we are.





Early research shows “a global mental health threat”

- The COVID-19 pandemic has created both **short-term** and **long-term** negative consequences for mental health outcomes.
 - Symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorders have more than tripled among U.S. adults compared to this time last year, with women and Black and Latinx communities most acutely impacted.
 - More than half — 51 percent — of respondents surveyed across seven countries by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that the pandemic had negatively impacted their mental health.



Early research shows “a global mental health threat”

- Research in the UK has found that one in five people infected with COVID-19 will develop mental illness within 90 days (anxiety, depression and insomnia being the most common, but also significantly higher risks of dementia).
- More than half — 51 percent — of respondents surveyed across seven countries by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that the pandemic had negatively impacted their mental health.
- CDC surveys show that since the pandemic began, 40 percent of Americans are now grappling with at least one mental health or drug-related problem. When it comes to young adults ages 18 to 24, that number is a staggering 75 percent.



Understanding health information

- 93 million American adults lack the health literacy skills to understand and use health information
- 1 in 5 American adults have health literacy skills considered to be “below basic”





Factors that impact a patient's ability to understand

- Patient literacy and communication skills, and health knowledge
- Provider communication skills and behaviors
- U.S. health care system





Everyone can have low health literacy...

- Everyone can have a hard time understanding health information
- Health information is always changing
- Patients are often very vulnerable
- Everyone can have trouble using and acting on health information



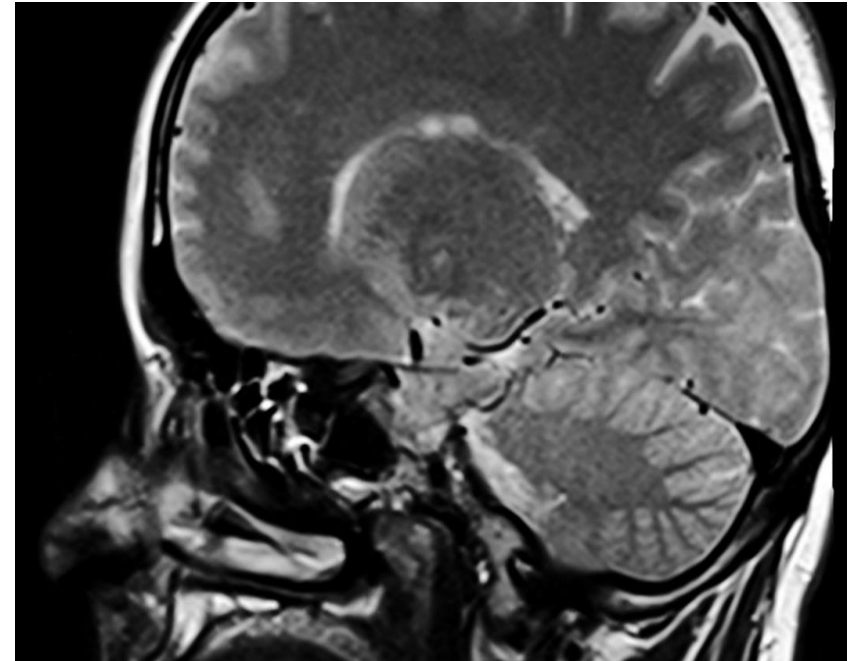
So, what does health literacy look like lately?

- A Michigan library had to ask patrons to stop microwaving books to kill the coronavirus after noticing returned books with scorched pages
- The Cleveland Clinic issued a public warning about the danger of using vodka concoctions as a hand sanitizer when recipes started to circulate
- The CDC had to remind people not to drink bleach or rinse food in it.



Current mental health epidemic also impacts health literacy

- People with anxiety can experience a reduced working memory
- Studies show that the part of the brain that handles fear and emotion (the **amygdala**) is more active in people with PTSD. Over time, PTSD changes your brain. The area that controls your memory (the hippocampus) becomes smaller
- Depression often causes an inability to concentrate





COVID-19 exposes vast inequities in society

The people most likely to have low health literacy include those dying in greater numbers from COVID-19

- Older adults
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Non-native English speakers
- People with low income and education levels



Significant communication challenges with COVID-19, including:

- Keeping audiences engaged with changing public health guidance
- Combating COVID-19 misinformation and — **disinformation**
- Writing about race, racism and disease risk
- Explaining vaccine trial phases
- Talking to older — and younger — people about coronavirus
- Communicating when more people — and more health providers — than ever are experiencing **acute mental health symptoms**



“Disinformation” adds another layer of vulnerability in COVID-19 and mental health epidemics

Healthcare and mental health workers say disinformation is one of the most dangerous elements of the coronavirus pandemic.

- People with baseless or disproven ideas about the pandemic are finding platforms to spread them
- Mistrustful, anti-science crowds have emerged to condemn masks and other important CDC guidelines such as social distancing
- Political leaders are spreading misinformation to minimize the severity of the disease, discredit preventative measures and sow distrust of government data
- Top scientists have been silenced in a way that would have been unthinkable during previous epidemics



Dangers of Mis/Disinformation and Impact on Mental Health

- Misinformation may not intend to mislead, but does so nevertheless
- Disinformation is deliberately misleading, such as propaganda or false reports intended to mislead the public, sometimes for political purposes
- Both can impact people's ability to make decisions for their health by creating anxiety, fear, depression or stress
- Make it more difficult to cope by exacerbating mental health symptoms
- Trigger panic attacks



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- Disinformation is deliberately misleading, such as propaganda or false reports intended to mislead the public, sometimes for political purposes
- Both can impact people's ability to make decisions for their health by creating anxiety, fear, depression or stress
- Make it more difficult to cope by exacerbating mental health symptoms (people with existing mental health issues are more vulnerable to mis/disinformation)
- Negative impact on memory

Health literacy skills now must include debunking disinformation



- [Let's watch a video.](#)



Mental Health Challenges of COVID-19

- Expected to take lasting toll on the mental health of millions of people.
 - Widespread despair and feelings of vulnerability
 - Fear of getting sick
 - Loneliness that accompanies quarantine
 - Grief of losing people we love and the life we knew
 - A fragile economy

All combine to create incredibly complicated health literacy challenges to mental well-being.



How do these challenges impact mental health?

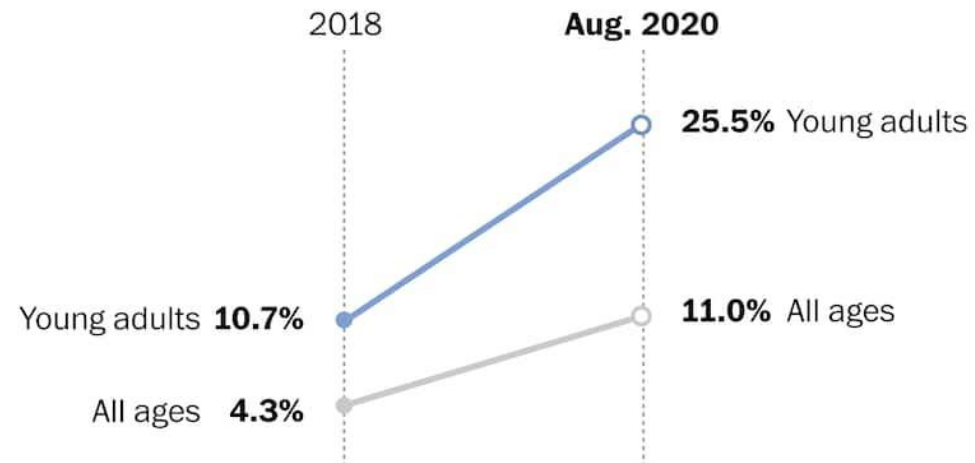
- Uncontrolled fear and worry about health and the health of loved ones, financial situation or job, or loss of support services
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression and PTSD
- Increased use of tobacco, and/or alcohol and other substances



How do these challenges impact mental health?

Suicidal thoughts increase during pandemic

The number of people who said they have seriously considered suicide in the past 30 days has increased most dramatically among the youngest adults (ages 18 to 24).



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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COVID-related stress is especially hard for ...

- People who have existing mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression or PTSD, or with substance use disorders
- People who get COVID-19 (brain function impacts)
- People who have lost their incomes
- Those who are socially isolated
- People who are homeless
- Those in some racial and ethnic minority groups
- People who don't have access to information in their primary language



COVID-related stress may be especially hard for ...

- People who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (for example older people, and people of any age with certain underlying medical conditions)
- **Children and teens**
- People caring for family members or loved ones
- **Frontline workers** such as health care providers, first responders and mental health therapists
- Essential workers who work in the food industry



How do these challenges impact mental health?

- Thoughts of suicide
 - A recent CDC poll asked young adults ages 18 to 24 if they had thought about killing themselves in the past 30 days. One in 4 said they had.

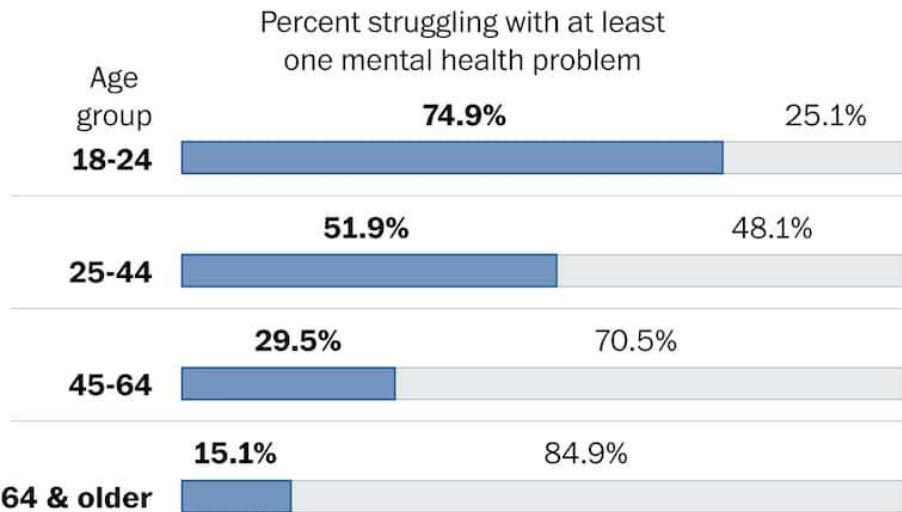




Children and teens suffering most

Youngest have been hardest hit by pandemic's mental health problems

Three in 4 young adults are struggling with at least one mental health problem, such as anxiety and depressive disorders, trauma and stress disorders, or substance use disorder.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Early research shows healthcare workers at greater risk

- March survey of healthcare workers (physicians, nurses and medical technicians) published in *Frontiers in Psychology* found that the healthcare group averaged a depressive symptoms score that would qualify as clinical depression and was 30 percent higher than the control group.
- The survey, conducted from March 20 to May 14, also found that study participants were less likely to engage in “proactive coping,” meaning they were doing less to prepare themselves for future stresses or adverse events.



Mental health impacts on those we rely upon

- Doctors
- Nurses
- EMTS
- Mental Health Therapists
- Public Health Workers
- Hospital Staff
- Clinic/Primary Care Staff





Frontline workers discuss mental health



"Would I really have to decide who lives and who dies?" — *Dr. Tsion Firew, M.D., New York*



"I close my eyes and I see the patient that I took care of last. I see... the images of suffering. That's gonna scar me for life."
— *Jacqueline Jackson, RN, New York*



Frontline workers discuss mental health

- [Let's watch a video.](#)



COVID-19 is a collective trauma

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MHA survey of frontline healthcare workers found:

Stressed out and stretched too thin	Exposure worries and little support
93% of health care workers were experiencing stress	76% of those with children reported that they were worried about exposing their child to COVID-19
86% reported experiencing anxiety	Nearly half worried about exposing spouse or partner
77% reported frustration	47% worried they would expose older adult family member(s)
76% reported exhaustion and burnout	39% of healthcare workers said they did not feel they had adequate emotional support
75% said they were overwhelmed	Nurses less likely to have emotional support (45%)



MHA survey of frontline healthcare workers found:

Emotional and physical exhaustion	
82% emotional exhaustion	56% headaches or stomachaches
70% trouble sleeping	55% questioning career path
68% physical exhaustion	52% compassion fatigue
63% work-related dread	52% heightened awareness and attention to being exposed
57% changes in appetite	Nurses more likely to report feeling too tired (67 %)



Next steps

- Normalize the significant mental health toll that COVID-19 has on specific patient groups, healthcare workers, and the population as a whole; appropriate resources accordingly
- Create targeted publications and digital tools that can help consumers take care of their own COVID-19-related mental health needs
- Address the convergence of mental health and COVID-19 disinformation. For example, relying on false information can dramatically increase anxiety and, if left unchecked, give way to depression. Call disinformation for what it is. This clarity is necessary, even when it might be unpopular.
- Provide tools in a variety of formats to help consumers weed through information (and dispel mis/disinformation) to help them make better decisions about their personal and our collective health.



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