

COVID-19 CONSUMING US MENTALLY, HERE'S HOW PSYCHOLOGISTS SUGGEST TO TACKLE CRISIS

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New Delhi: It is fair to say that the saying 'life is full of challenges' is true in every word and sense. The Covid-19 pandemic has, however, exacerbated these challenges be it physical or mental.

From doctors who are at the frontlines fighting against this deadly virus and protecting our lives to the children and parents locked up inside their houses because of restrictions - this pandemic has presented challenges that we were not prepared for.

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Dr Sanjeev P. Sahni, renowned psychologist and Director at Jindal Institute of Behavioural Sciences (JIBS), shared his views on how physical and mental health is impacted because of the pandemic and the steps one should take to keep it in check.

1) **Exercise Regularly:** The Covid-19 pandemic has taught us the importance of exercising and working out as it has a huge impact on our immunity. Although there were restrictions on our mobility, exercising doesn't necessarily mean going to the gym and pulling up weights.

Simple exercises without any special types of equipment have a great impact on our mental health as well. Breathing exercises, yoga, are among the most important ones that a person, not only during a pandemic but even after all this gets over, should make a part of their life.

2) **Sleeping Properly:** With everything, from work to education, moving online, the sleeping pattern of people has been compromised. Especially with children, it is seen that they are not taking a proper eight hours of sleep. Children, below 14 years of age need to sleep at least eight hours a day, and children above 14 years to sleep for seven hours.

When we sleep our body relaxes and it helps in maintaining our emotional and mental health. Even if you are sleeping at 3 AM, make sure you take proper seven-hour sleep. During weekends, it is also advised to take a nap of around one hour during the afternoon. Parents should ensure that their child is sleeping properly, otherwise, they will remain irritated throughout the day, thereby compromising their mental health.

3) **Communicating Your Thoughts:** With restrictions on the movement of people in place, it is seen that the process of communicating has also been compromised because we are locked inside our houses. Although we can connect with people online, sometimes a person is unable to

speak about their thoughts online, rather they are more comfortable talking in person.

Parents should ensure that they build a kind of environment where children could easily come up to them and talk about their issues. Otherwise, the mental health of the child will be greatly impacted. With continuous thoughts going inside their mind and no one around to talk about it, it will take a toll on their mind and impact their mental health negatively.

For the doctors also, it is equally important that they either talk about it with tier peers or seek counseling as they are not only working round the clock but also see people dying in front of them. The impact of all this can have a very negative influence, especially on mental health and it becomes necessary that they also communicate about it. There are dedicated helplines for frontline workers where they can seek counseling.

4) Seeking Professional Help: The impact of the pandemic could be so worse sometimes that it greatly impacts our emotional health. The grief of losing someone close to you, the pain of not being able to support your friends when they needed help, facing financial problems because someone lost their job, the challenges could take a great toll on our mental well-being.

In such a scenario, it is advisable to approach a counsellor as they are trained for such situations. There is no point in feeling embarrassed about it, as counselling can be really helpful sometimes. In our country, it is seen that there is a stigma around seeking professional help. It should be done away with.

Mental health is an equally important part of an individual's well-being, as physical health is. Therefore, there is no point in feeling worried about counselling.

5) Using Social Media Effectively: Social media is a sea of information. From negative information that will impact your mental well-being to positive information that will guide you on how to take care of yourself, everything is there. It was found that training in emotional intelligence skills, can help an individual to take care of themselves during the pandemic.

There are ample videos available on social platforms, from self-help to taking care of one's emotional well-being. Not only videos, but one can go through blogs and articles also that will give them an idea about taking care of their emotional health. People trained in such skills also have a lower chance of falling prey to depression and suicidal thoughts.