

One Little Cell Just Changed Our Lives..

Do you know what it feels like?"

"What, like it's Godzilla, King Kong, alien attack: all in one!"

"Kind of... feels like our world is never going to be the same..."



This exchange from Steven Soderbergh's movie **Contagion (2011)** sounds uncannily real now in a world gripped with **COVID-19**. The movie depicts the breaking down of government and public health systems in the face of a new and deadly pandemic.

At present, the fear about the corona virus has gripped the world. This new illness certainly is frightening and needs attention, but it is important to note that far more people die from an illness that is all too familiar — 'the seasonal flu'.

Why are we so afraid of this novel corona virus ? Humans are social creatures—yes, all of us. While the corona virus pandemic is an extreme, largely unprecedented moment, the kind of seclusion that is been eating at people over the last few weeks is not as uncommon an experience as you might imagine. The impacts of social isolation on our bodies and minds have been felt and studied in a variety of different groups.

We have never been as connected as we are now, or as isolated.

Many of us have been instructed to "shelter down" in our homes and not go out unless absolutely necessary. Being confined to our homes during an emergency crises can create more anxiety and emotional tension among family members. It's easy to become fused, reactive, and "get on each other's nerves".

First off, it is important to remember that isolation does not just numb your brain with boredom. "People start getting lethargic when they do not have positive inputs into their small worlds. "We can expect depression to kick in, and depression and anxiety are kissing cousins." These symptoms are likely to be particularly intense during corona virus-related isolation, when you are in a situation like we are now, when you are not certain how long you will be asked to maintain social distance, that produces anxiety as well."

In this situation, people frequently feel stunned, disoriented or unable to integrate distressing information. Once these initial reactions subside, people can experience a variety of thoughts and behaviors. Common responses can be:

- **Intense or unpredictable feelings.** You may be anxious, nervous, overwhelmed or grief-stricken. You may also feel more irritable or moody than usual.

- **Changes to thoughts and behavior patterns.** You might have vivid memories of last night's news . It may be difficult to concentrate, sleep and eating patterns also can be disrupted — some people may overeat and oversleep, while others experience a loss of sleep and loss of appetite.
- **Stress-related physical symptoms:** Headaches, nausea , fever , cough, running nose may occur or other environmental sensations may stimulate the disaster creating heightened anxiety. These “triggers” may be accompanied by the impending fears that virus might attack .
- **Strained interpersonal relationships.** Increased conflict, such as more frequent disagreements with family members can occur. You might also become withdrawn, isolated or disengaged from your usual social activities because of stay at home 24*7.

How do I cope?

Fortunately, research shows that most people are resilient and with the passing time are able to bounce back. It is common for people to experience stress, but within a few months most people are able to resume functioning as they did prior . It is important to remember that resilience and recovery are the norm, not prolonged distress.

There are a number of steps you can take to build emotional well-being and gain a sense of control .

- Practice listening and responding to others rather than reacting.
- Govern your conversations to be more democratic: listen, understand, respond and allow the same to others.
- Respond with more kindness, understanding, and empathy. Smile, laugh.
- Watch only authentic news, (official website of World health organization, National centre for disease control etc.) and be careful how you interpret information.
- Do not let anxiety, tension and misinformation create craziness. Remember, craziness accelerates exponentially and it's easy to be drawn into it.
- **Communicate your experience.** Express what you are feeling in whatever ways feel comfortable to you — such as talking with family or close friends, keeping a diary or engaging in a creative activity (e.g., drawing, molding clay, etc).
- **Engage in healthy behaviors** to enhance your ability to cope with excessive stress. Eat well-balanced meals and get plenty of rest. If you experience ongoing difficulties with sleep, you may be able to find some relief through relaxation techniques.
- **Establish or re-establish routines.** This can include eating meals at regular times, sleeping and waking on a regular cycle, or following an exercise program.
- Build in some positive routines to have something to look forward to during these distressing times, like pursuing a hobby, reading a good book, cooking etc.
- Focus on what you're doing right now. Remind yourself that you are doing your part to minimize the risks by practicing social distancing and keeping your hands and your home clean.



We are all on edge because of the corona virus. Our daily lives have been disrupted, we are not sure what tomorrow may bring, in this circumstance many parents are having a harder time dealing with COVID-19 than their children, and some of the anxiety that kids are experiencing may be inadvertently passed on by worried parents.

- Experts says, as parent dealing with your own anxiety can be the most powerful way to make sure your kids feel secure. If you or your children are feeling worried, learning how to deal with that anxiety in a healthy way can help the whole family be more resilient, both now and when the pandemic is finally over.
- Kids may not always be able to express how they are feeling. For **younger children**, instead of saying “Tell me how anxious you are.” Use a feeling chart , which you can find on the internet, you can ask kids to point to the feeling they are having now. For **kids who are more able to articulate how they are feeling**, it is better to ask the straight question, “If you ask a vague question you are going to get a vague answer,” If you’re wondering **about a teenager**, talk about yourself first. “You can say something like, “I saw this article today and it made me wonder about this and that. Did you see something like that? What’s your reaction to it?”
- Don’t forget to structure their day. As parents we often think that setting boundaries for a child is a way to make our lives easier, but in fact kids thrive on them, too. It is easy for children to get bored ,if they are facing a day without structure, and anxiety can thrive under those circumstances. Make sure that you are structuring their days. Alternate chores or schoolwork with more fun activities and periods of free time. Make sure kids are still getting the chance to exercise and socialize with friends via phone calls.

When should I seek professional help?

If you notice persistent feelings of distress or hopelessness and you feel like you are barely able to get through your daily responsibilities and activities, consult with a mental health professional.

To know more about COVID19 visit: → <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

→ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/mental-health-and-psychological-resilience-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

STAY HOME... STAY SAFE

Thank you for taking the time to read about my reflections. I hope you have found something useful here.

RosseySengupta, School Counsellor, TIGPS,Ariadaha ,

tigpsar.counselor@gmail.com