Mental Health and Coping during the COVID-19 Outbreak

March 16, 2020

We understand that the outbreak of coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) is stressful for individuals, families, and communities. Fear and anxiety about a novel disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children alike.

Reactions to stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health status and that of your loved ones who may have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- Worsening of chronic health problems.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Follow the tips below to protect your own mental health as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19. This may include limiting time on social media or watching the news.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind and remind yourself that strong feelings will fade. Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly. Try to do some other activities you enjoy to return to your normal life.
- Connect with others. Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member. Maintain healthy relationships. If you cannot be near others, try talking on the phone or using video chat to connect.
- Maintain a sense of hope and positive thinking. Health officials are learning more about COVID-19 each day, and are providing effective recommendations to help you keep yourself and your family safe.

An essential part of supporting oneself is to remain connected with friends and family. The following tips can help you support them, as well:

- Check in regularly with friends and family. Maintain social distancing whilst still connecting by calling or using video chat to check-in with loved ones.

- Calm their fears by sharing accurate information about COVID-19 and the actual risk to others. False information causes undue stress throughout the community.
  - Cite reliable sources of information, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Oregon Health Authority (OHA), and local public health authorities.

If you or someone you know is struggling with stress about the novel coronavirus disease, the following resources are available to help:

- **Oregon Warmline:** 1-800-698-2392 or communitycounselingsolutions.org/warmline/
- **Oregon Youthline:** 877-968-8491 or text teen2teen to 839863
- **Marion County Psychiatric Crisis Center:** Available 24/7 for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis. Call 503-585-4949

Learn more about taking care of your emotional health at: https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp

OHA has comprehensive information on their website including fact sheets and information about the number of persons under monitoring or investigation. You may also sign-up for regular email updates to keep informed of the latest developments in Oregon.

Please visit the Marion County Health and Human Services website for additional information and links to both OHA and the CDC. For general information about the novel coronavirus, please call 2-1-1.