Dealing with Anxiety related to the COVID Pandemic

David Arabie, LPC

With words such as pandemic, self-quarantine, social distancing, national crisis, and global panic littering every news headline, no wonder people across the US are finding themselves having to find ways to manage their emotions regarding the current outbreak of COVID-19. Many people who have never experienced any significant symptoms of anxiety are now starting to understand what many in this country have spent countless hours trying to manage. For those who have suffered from anxiety prior to COVID-19, this is an all too familiar routine. For others, it is a seldom felt emotion that would come and go like a strong wind. But now that strong wind is messing up more than just hairstyles, it is starting to affect the way people think, feel, and view the world.

Educating the community on what is anxiety, and better ways to manage it when it occurs, seems just as imperative as learning the appropriate ways to wash your hands or use effective social distancing.

ANXIETY DEFINED

In the simplest of terms, anxiety is defined as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. First and foremost, it is an emotion – a feeling. Nothing more, nothing less. Just like the emotions of love, contentment, and happiness, anxiety is an identified feeling that has been assigned or connected to an identified situation. When thinking about any virus, the emotional or psychological tendency is to automatically assign anxiety and fear to the virus. Just the word virus has an ominous tone to it. Changing the perception of the situation is key in managing anxiety; whether in direct relation to thoughts of COVID-19 or any other situation in your life. Learning to take the emotion out of the situation is vital to emotional survival in any situation.

USE SOUND JUDGMENT

Whether a healthcare worker, a teacher, a mom or dad, or a student, everyone has been trained to manage anxiety in some way or another. Everyone has been faced with a decision – a decision that had both positive and negative consequences attached to it. In order to make the best decision, sound judgment needs to be utilized, not emotions.

Judgment is defined as the process of forming an opinion or evaluation based on understanding and comparison. It is not about what feels right, it is about what has been judged right based on what is the best action to take to remedy the situation. Anxiety occurs when there is worry about an uncertain outcome. If sound judgment is used, the situation will have less of an “uncertain outcome” feel to it. COVID-19 is highly contagious. Use sound judgment. Increase handwashing. Wear protective gloves when necessary. Minimize or eliminate touching your eyes, mouth, and nose with unwashed or sanitized hands. Decrease your exposure to populated areas. Keep a safe distance from others. Simply follow the CDC guidelines. Understand, evaluate and compare personal behaviors to the CDC guidelines. Sound judgment would conclude that if compliance with CDC guidelines are high, the possibility of exposure is low. Ah, the positive consequence of sound judgment.

Anxiety can paralyze the ability to think rationally. It clouds perception. It arrests hope. In the midst combatting the effects of COVID-19, anxiety need not have any power or presence. Sound judgment needs to be practiced and be prevalent in everyday decision making.

We at Chambers Health strive to continue our tradition of being “What You Need, Where You Are”, and we look forward to serving the health and wellness needs of our communities by providing the best care possible.