Covid and Your Mental Health

No one would deny these past nine months have been rough. The fear of dying from the Coronavirus, losing our loved ones as well as our jobs, insurance, etc, can cause depression and anxiety in all of us. But for those who already suffer from depression and anxiety, Covid has been especially rough.

In the past, those who suffered from depression could alleviate it somewhat by visiting with friends, getting out of the house, helping others. Now, they can't do any of those things and they are suffering even more from the isolation. Adding to their depression is wondering when or if they will have a job again, how they will put food on the table, will life ever get back to normal?

According to an article on webmd.com from HealthDay News, *The pandemic is taking a big toll on Americans' psyches: A new government report found that about 41% of adults surveyed in late June "reported an adverse mental or behavioral health condition."*

That's a big rise from 2019. For example, the data shows that the number of Americans suffering from an anxiety disorder tripled by late June compared to the same time last year, and the number of those with depression had jumped fourfold.

About 1 in every 10 survey respondents also said they'd started or increased their use of alcohol or illicit drugs during the pandemic, said a team led by Rashon Lane, of the CDC's COVID-19 Response Team.

Suicidal thoughts are on the rise, too: Compared to data from 2018, "approximately twice as many respondents reported serious consideration of suicide in the previous 30 days," the report stated.

Teenagers and young adults are suffering most of all.

An npr.org articles states, *At the end of June, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention surveyed 5,740 Americans on their mental health. They found symptoms of anxiety and depression were up sharply across the board between March and June, compared with the same time the previous year. And young people seemed to be the hardest-hit of any group. Almost 11 percent of all respondents to that survey said they had "seriously considered" suicide in the past 30 days. For those ages 18 to 24, the number was 1 in 4 — more than twice as high.*

According to CDC data, suicide is the second-leading cause of death among young people aged 10 to 24. The effects of isolation are heightening this trend. The closure of schools and other social meeting spots youth normally frequent has forced students to stay confined to their homes, increasing the rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts for people of this age group.

As we as a society continue to deal with COVID and the forced lockdowns, here are a few ideas to help you cope with the isolation.

Call a friend. Use computer or phone apps like Skype or Google Duo so you can actually see the person you're talking to. While you're not actually together in person, you will feel closer to the person than if you just hear their voice. It's the next best thing to being there and right now it's the safest way to be with them.

Take up a hobby like painting or writing, something where you feel creative. Work on that project you've been meaning to get to. Exercise your brain with Sudoku or cross word puzzles.

Exercise. Whether you go outside to exercise or you use an exercise video, exercise releases endorphins which can help lessen our anxiety and depression.

If you find yourself unable to cope with your depression, don't be afraid or ashamed to reach out to a mental health professional. Many of us are dealing with depression and anxiety due to Covid. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, please get help right away.
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 any time of day
- Call 911
- Call a mental health professional
- Call a loved one or close friend

Lastly, remember lil Gary's Legacy is here to help you with information, resources and encouragement. We CAN get through this. One day at a time.

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