

CHOICES/JAGCE
Present
“Reach Out” -
Helping Students Through The
Covid-19 Disruption

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Who are we in this battle against Covid-19?

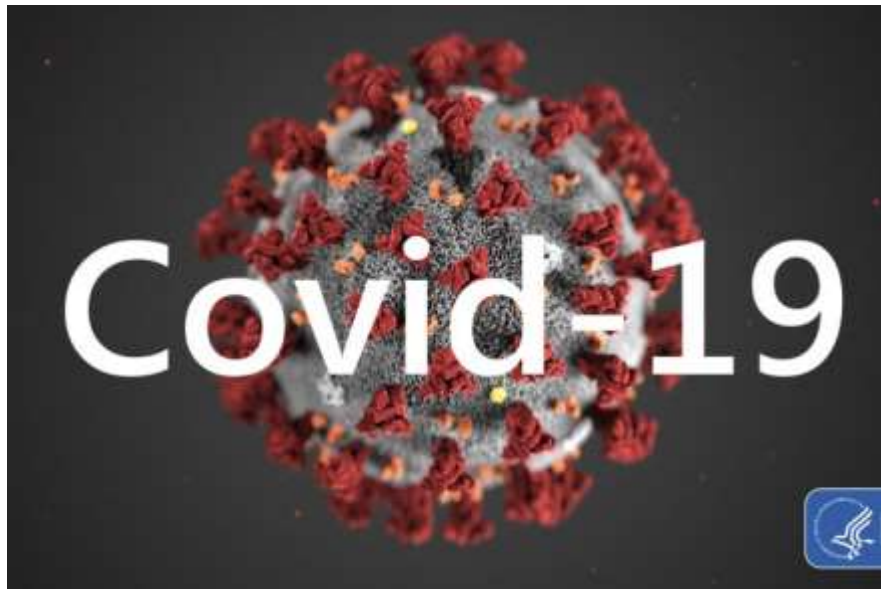
- ▶ As counsellors we are the frontrunners in the psychosocial, emotional and cognitive war against Covid-19. Our equipment to fight is our training and our unique ability to empathize with our clients.
- ▶ We are VERY important change agents - we help to get the minds of our people adapted to the reality of life before, during and after Covid-19

Coronavirus/Covid-19

We are in a valiant fight for a sense of normalcy

- ▶ Covid-19 has changed our normal to a new paradigm
- ▶ FACT CHECK - Changes as a result of Covid-19
 - How we interact with each other
 - Influence our culture e.g. Funerals, marriages, social gatherings
 - The teaching/learning process. Online education is now!
 - Accepting responsibility for self and others
- ▶ Fact is Covid-19 will never allow life to be the same as it was before

CHANGES Ahead



- ▶ As professionals we **MUST** recognise that Covid-19 will result in change and that we **MUST** be prepared to adapt to these changes ourselves **BEFORE** we can help our clients.
- ▶ How do we cope with crises?
- ▶ How do we adapt and grow from this pandemic?

How are YOU coping?

- ▶ I am experiencing the range of emotions to include
- ▶ Uncertainty
- ▶ Changes in routine
- ▶ Social isolation that is different than before Covid-19
- ▶ Feeling overwhelmed or overloaded with information both factual and fictitious

As a Counsellor-Preparation of Self FIRST

- ▶ Make enough room to adjust mentally
 - It is ok to feel all the emotions
 - Loss
 - Anxiety
 - Hopelessness
 - Helplessness
 - Panic attack
 - Nightmares
 - Emotional outbursts
- ▶ Feeling diverse emotions indicates that you are not in denial
 - ▶ NO normal person will feel good in a global disaster, BE GRATEFUL FOR DISCOMFORT - it indicates that you are aware of a threat and that you are responding with emotions as expected

THE 4Fs

- ▶ Family - use this opportunity to reconnect, to refresh and reengage family that were distant.
- ▶ Food - ensure that the basic needs are met. Especially those in your family with special food needs. Allergies ought to be foremost in your minds. Eating healthy - fruits, vegetables, water. Remember children do not have their “school stomachs” so ensure enough healthy choices are available
- ▶ Friends - we are social beings and we need that external source for balance. Reconnect use social media to our advantage to remain connected
- ▶ Fitness - being at home will reduce the level of activity. Any form of exercise is recommended

Ignore or Limit Access to “News”

- ▶ You ought to filter the information you receive. Check the source of your information. Choose what you pass on to others. As counsellors we have a responsibility to give accurate and reliable information to our clients.
- ▶ For personal benefit limit the exposure to news reports as it may become overwhelming.
- ▶ Follow the authorities e.g. Ministry of Health guidelines and the updates as presented. Ask relevant questions and share information that clarifies based on facts and not opinion.

Plan, Plan, Prepare and Act

- ▶ Identify needs and meet needs as best as possible, remembering the most vulnerable - elderly and children and persons with underlying conditions.
- ▶ Stay connected. Use all available working media to connect with others.

Psychological Effect on Children and Adults

- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Extremes in behaviour
- ▶ Frustrations
- ▶ Increased hostility

Persons ought to realise that behaviour and actions during this time is normal and expected and that expressing these feeling **MUST** be allowed, within reason as different individuals will have different ways of expressing emotions. The key is to express in a healthy manner

Honesty

- ▶ Being honest, open , factual about the events will help in alleviating the threat or fears.
- ▶ Information sharing ought to be age appropriate
- ▶ Seek answers and clarification from experts or reputable sources where possible
- ▶ Explaining death and the seriousness of the Covid-19 virus.
- ▶ Sharing positive outcomes is very important. Recovering stories give hope. Identify the positives - more time spent with family, opportunity to get projects in home done - painting, gardening, washing/sanitization of public spaces, improved hygiene practices. Innovative ideas e.g. locally produced ventilators, mask production

Relaxation Techniques

- ▶ Research these techniques and share - breathing techniques
- ▶ “Scream into a pillow” to express emotions
- ▶ Pulling weeds, gardening
- ▶ Exercising
- ▶ Making time for self - especially during lockdown. Find a space to do activity by oneself. If space is limited bargain for time slots to use designated space. Utilise the outdoors - back yards, any space - under a tree. Create play spaces or obstacle courses to increase interest and activity. Remember sunshine and activity are highly recommended
- ▶ Calming strategies - massages, head rubs, scented candles, blowing bubbles, blowing a pinwheel, counting (ascending or descending order, random starting points), imagining favourite places talk about what they see, smell, hear.

Consistent routines

- ▶ Practicing and repeating the health guidelines with children
- ▶ Handwashing sessions especially for the younger children
- ▶ Creative inclusion at home - arts and craft, music, games, cooking, creating new and innovative ways of interacting
- ▶ Support during online school sessions, use scheduled times efficiently
- ▶ For Christian minded households Prayers and Praise and worship sessions with entire family.

Inclusive “at home activities”

- ▶ Gardening
- ▶ Baking
- ▶ Music - create musical instruments from available resources. Make music together, have concerts.
- ▶ Assign age appropriate tasks for each member of home
- ▶ Painting
- ▶ Start a business
- ▶ Games
- ▶ Have “get real talk sessions” in home. Free associations are helpful and encouraged
- ▶ Encourage journaling, feed the talent of the child or even as adults

Family Matters


- ▶ Where there are pre-existing issues in the family, the focus on reconnecting, being honest and respectful of each other will go a far way to ease the added stress in the home.
- ▶ Emphasis on love and selflessness in all the individuals is important
- ▶ As counsellors where we are aware of these pre-existing issues we ought to engage these clients via telephone calls, Whatsapp just to ensure they are guided during these stressful times.
- ▶ Those clients who may be on medication, ensure that their supply is adequate, encourage parents to administer medication and to meet appointments where necessary

Beating Covid-19

- ▶ Remember:
- ▶ Fear is a *normal* response to actual or perceived threat or danger. If the threat is removed, explained or accepted the fear should decrease or diminish.
- ▶ Use Cognitive Theory to bolster your sessions. Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy and Solution Focused Brief Therapy are two theoretical tools I employ in this instance. However, as counsellors use the therapy most useful and effective in your particular situation.
- ▶ Our response/behaviour is not determined by Covid-19 but by our thoughts about what is happening. Our behaviour is significantly influenced by our perceptions and interpretations of the environment.

Hope...

- ▶ We should all come out of Covid-19 with a new mindset, new, bold and innovative ways of presenting our skills as counsellors. Read, research and educate yourselves and share ideas.
- ▶ Romans 5 3-4 states “Glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance character and character hope”
- ▶ “We are changing the landscape of Jamaica and we are changing the mindset of Jamaicans to one of hope and optimism and all of us working together to overcome any challenge” - Rt. Hon. Andrew Holness

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- ▶ “When trouble comes our way consider it an opportunity for great joy, for you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow” - James 1 2-4

Thank You, Be Safe! Stay Blessed!