

The **ABCs** of managing stress during a flu pandemic

Each year there is a flu season, and no one can tell how serious it will be, which makes news of any flu outbreak stressful. This year we are experiencing a worldwide spread of the H1N1 flu – a flu pandemic. Our ability to cope with the “pandemic flu news” and to take actions we need to protect ourselves and loved ones depends on how well we manage our stress and anxiety. The good news is there are actions we can take *now* to increase our ability to cope with any stress – not just “pandemic flu stress”. The ABCs of stress management will help us be stronger, more resilient and better able to handle any stressful time in our lives.

ACTIVITY is important – stay physically and mentally active, at home or away from home

BREATHE deeply – it can help you to feel more relaxed and focused

COMFORT... increase calming activities to offset anxiety about the pandemic

DON'T turn to drugs or alcohol...that isn't a safe way to cope and may cause more stress

EXERCISE, eat well and rest to be refreshed each and every day

FIND comfort and strength in personal and/or spiritual beliefs

GET caring support when feeling overwhelmed or unable to cope

HELP kids learn to keep hands away from their mouth, eyes and nose as much as possible

IDENTIFY ways to keep daily routines and important family rituals going smoothly

JOT down doctor, medical, family and emergency contact numbers to have on hand

KEEP a sense of humor! Watch a comedy; smile and tell a joke or two...

LEARN about the current flu and how to protect against it – be prepared!

MAINTEIN normal routines whenever possible, routines can be reassuring

NURTURE...take time to pause and enjoy special moments when they come along

OPEN up to new and healthier ways of living; hangout with health-minded friends

PLAN ahead for possible school closures and stay-at-home days

QUIT the guilt. Accept that you are doing your best and you can't control everything

REMEMBER you are "only" human...

SHARE concerns with others who understand, seek input and suggestions

TAKE doctor-prescribed medicines to stay healthy

UNDERSTAND and accept some feelings of fear, anxiety, anger and grief

VALUE the gift of each day and accept what it brings

WASH hands often, cover coughs and sneezes, and stay home when you're sick

EXAMINE schedules and goals and limit them when the pandemic is at its worst

SAY **Y**ES to doing random acts of kindness – caring for others reaps its own rewards

ZERO in on the things you can change, let go of those you can't and know the difference

Know when you need help – and get the help you deserve!

Please seek mental health assistance if you feel depressed, hopeless, very fearful or angry... or if you are experiencing physical problems with no medical explanation. There is help available for you.

This publication is available online at www.ct.gov/dmhas/flu.stress



Connecticut Department of Mental Health
and Addiction Services



Connecticut Department of
Children and Families

