

# COVID-19 AND HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

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# Reactive Social Distancing

- “Reactive social distancing” is a form of behavioural responses where individuals avoid potentially infectious contacts in response to available information on an ongoing epidemic or pandemic.
- An ongoing University of Southern California study published its first round of results in March, reporting that the coronavirus had already created significant shifts in people’s behaviour. Among the top findings:
  - a) 85 percent of people reported washing their hands or using sanitiser more often than before.
  - b) 61 percent reported following social distancing guidelines.
  - c) Twenty-two percent reported stockpiling essentials like food or water.

- Behavioural changes like these may be fear-driven to some extent, says **Yale School of Medicine health** psychologist Valeria Martinez-Kaigi, who is not affiliated with the study.
- In the wake of COVID-19, certain habits we've adapted will likely stick around as well, says **Kate White**, a behavioural scientist at the **University of British Columbia**. "Our vigilance around things like disinfecting surfaces — that's probably going to continue," she says.

- Our new ways of interacting with each other — “live long and prosper” salutes instead of handshakes, video chats instead of conference-room huddles — are also likely to stick to some degree. The old social norm is, “you meet someone, you automatically shake hands. Those social exchanges are going to evolve,” White says.
- But what lingers most after a pandemic, or any large-scale catastrophe, is a pervasive sense that the world is fundamentally unpredictable — that life feels more fragile than it once did. Following a disaster, the tendency to believe that a threat is imminent may be magnified in some people.



- Past pandemics have ushered in dramatic governmental shifts on this level. After British colonial authorities failed to protect India from the worst of the 1918 flu pandemic, the population's fury helped fuel the Indian independence movement led by Mahatma Gandhi.
- It's possible that fighting the coronavirus will inspire this kind of unity-seeking in the U.S. and elsewhere. "One would assume a pandemic would be something that could do that," Mettler says. "This is, in many ways, like fighting a war. The enemy is the disease."



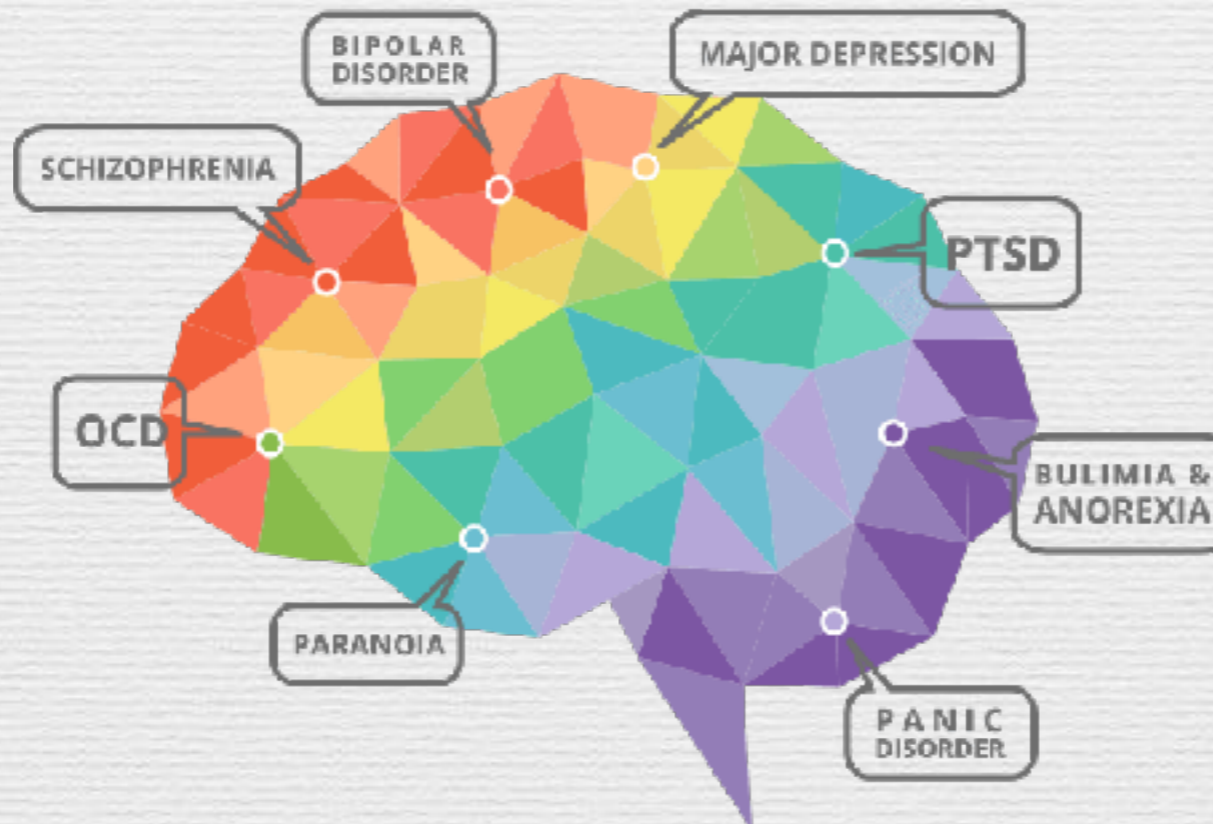
- When you are forced to do things differently, new habits begin to form.

- This is a difficult time for people with poor-quality relationships, such as abusive partners, or those struggling with behaviours such as alcoholism and gambling.
- Similarly, people who have mental illnesses, such as depression, obsessive-compulsive disorders and paranoia, may find shocks like this hard to deal with.



# Psychological Disorders

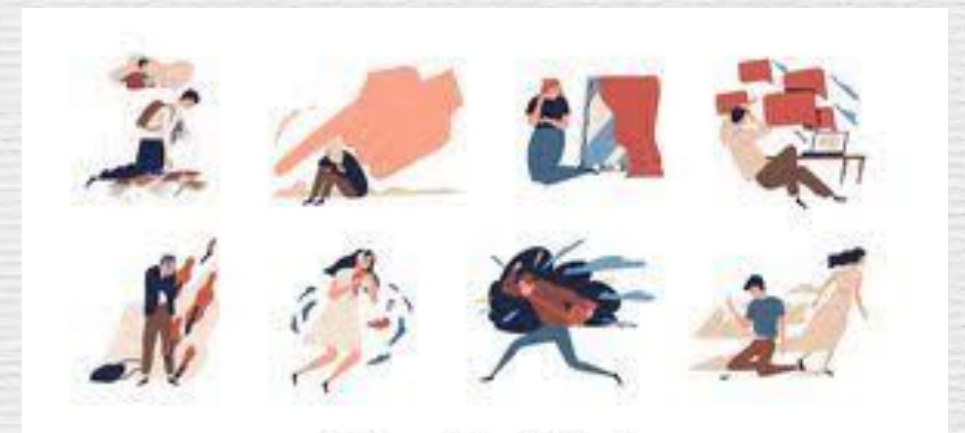
- As the physical coronavirus pandemic continues to spread, an emotional pandemic is following fast in its wake.
- Because pandemic disasters are unique and do not include congregate sites for prolonged support and recovery, they require specific response strategies to ensure the behavioural health needs of children and families. Pandemic planning must address these needs and disease-containment measures.





# Separation Anxiety Disorder

- Individuals with separation anxiety disorder are fearful and anxious about separation from attachment figures to an extent that it is developmentally not appropriate.
- Some kids, experience separation anxiety that doesn't go away, even with a parent's best efforts. These children experience a continuation or reoccurrence of intense separation anxiety during their elementary school years or beyond. If separation anxiety is excessive enough to interfere with normal activities like school and friendships, and lasts for months rather than days, it may be a sign of separation anxiety disorder.
- [https://www.instagram.com/p/B8S\\_Z8YHgcS/?igshid=v07u07st85jf](https://www.instagram.com/p/B8S_Z8YHgcS/?igshid=v07u07st85jf)



# Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

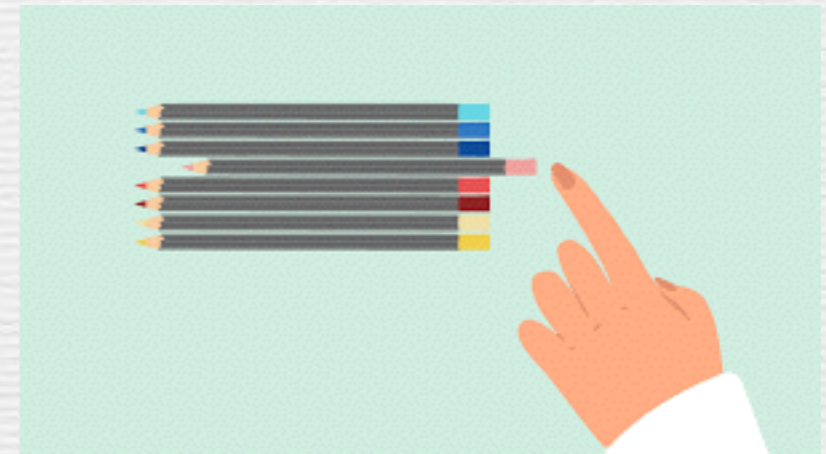
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is a serious anxiety-related condition where a person experiences frequent intrusive and unwelcome thoughts, commonly referred to as obsessions.
- The present pandemic has led to a number of additional worries for those affected by OCD. Concerns are being reported in the following areas:
  - Contamination fears leading to additional washing/cleaning
  - Intrusive thoughts around passing the virus on to loved ones / elderly
  - Harm related obsessions such as - 'Have I been careless? Does this mean I secretly want people to die?'
  - Increase in health anxiety/worrying about being more vulnerable
  - Worries about not being able to do exercise for mental well-being if isolated

# Will everybody with OCD be struggling now?

## Group 1

Those currently receiving therapy and/or have had therapy and are making good progress along the recovery journey:

- Worries about being able to even attend therapy
- Where is the line between what is common sense to protect ourselves and what is an OCD compulsion?
- How do I challenge my OCD when I am being asked to do rituals therapy suggested I shouldn't engage with?



## Group 2

Those yet to receive any kind of therapy, or those where therapy is yet to be effective:

- No therapy input at this time to turn to for help in these challenging times.
- Have no alternative strategies in place to challenge regular OCD, without the added extreme level of anxiety brought on by COVID-19.



# Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



- Disease-containment measures such as quarantine and isolation can be traumatising to a significant portion of children and parents. Criteria for PTSD was met in 30% of isolated or quarantined children based on parental reports, and 25% of quarantined or isolated parents (based on self-reports)
- It has left millions without jobs, sent billions into isolation and forced nearly everyone on earth to grapple with the feeling that they or those they love are suddenly physically vulnerable.
- Some states are already taking action. In New York, the state hardest-hit by coronavirus, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced on Wednesday a free mental health hotline, staffed by 6,000 volunteers.



# Anxiety

- Anxiety is usually defined as a diffuse, vague, very unpleasant feeling of fear and apprehension.
- The anxious individual also shows combinations of the following symptoms : rapid heart rate, shortness of breath, diarrhoea, loss of appetite, fainting, dizziness, sweating, sleepiness, frequent urination and tremors.



# Coping With Stress

- The corona virus outbreak can be stressful for many people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.
- Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include
  - Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
  - Changes in sleep or eating patterns
  - Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
  - Worsening of chronic health problems
  - Worsening of mental health conditions
  - Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs



# Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.



- There are lots of examples of how this crisis is inspiring incredible creativity all around the world:
  - Medical professionals are reorganising emergency rooms and setting up makeshift facilities and even figuring out ways to upgrade ventilators.
  - Countless organisations and individuals are donating masks and other supplies.
  - There's a "worldwide hackathon" underway to solve some of the supply shortages.
  - Schools are using Zoom and other forms of video chat software to reconnect students with their friends.
- Disrupting one's usual routine for the benefit of others may not be to everyone's liking, but throughout history, humans have been willing to make sacrifices to protect the health of others. The willingness to do so seems to be part of human nature.

“It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change.”

*Leon C. Megginson*

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