OMICRON - UNCERTAINTY RAISING APPREHENSION ANXIETY DEPRESSION

Unpredictable circumstances impact one’s behavior patterns and coping mechanisms. Covid 19 pandemic has instigated a new wave of mental health awareness. It forced people to reflect upon depression, substance abuse, and anxiety issues. The rising cases of Omicron variant is bound to induce anxiety and fear among people.

New variant OMICRON is anxiety-provoking for patients, non-patients, carers, and healthcare professionals due to

★ its infective potential,
★ the uncertainty of manifestations and prognosis,
★ restrictions imposed by the Govt.

leading to dysfunction in social, occupational, psychological, familial, economic and other domains.

Anxiety is compounded by rumors, flooding of information in the media and internet, changes in daily life and routine, economic instability, discrimination, stigma, feeling of alienation, and guilt. Anxiety is characterized by worry, brooding, nervousness, being jittery, having tremors and palpitations, chest discomfort, and breathing problems.

Depression is characterized by low mood, tiredness, pessimism, poor sleep and appetite, feeling helpless, guilty, and hopeless, with a gradual reduction in work output. Older people are more vulnerable.

How to cope with it?

C be CALM
O be OPTIMISTIC
R be RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN
O use ONLINE PLATFORM
N NO NEGATIVE THOUGHTS
A ACKNOWLEDGE & APPRECIATE

A new strain calls for immediate attention towards one’s mental health in order to keep negative thoughts, anxiety and other mental health concerns at bay.

CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS WELL BEING
ISSUES CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS CAN HAVE
★ Worry about school or college reopening
★ Anxious about subjects
★ Fear about entrance exams
★ Not able to play outside
★ Fear that they might get the virus, and they will be taken away/quarantined/hospitalized
★ Fear that their parents, siblings, grandparents or pets will get it and they will be taken away
★ Worry if anybody dies
★ Concern about finances, about house expenses, school fees, college admission
★ They can get affected by fights/issues that happen between parents

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO
★ Involve children in prevention efforts
★ Give age appropriate tasks and responsibilities, such as washing hands with soap for 20 seconds, no touching mouth, nose and eyes, etc.
★ Provide adequate reasons and encouragement to follow the preventive tasks.
★ Praise them for following the same
★ Discuss their concerns realistically.
★ Avoid scolding, abusing and spanking the children
★ Sharing helps. Encourage and allow them to talk to friends, relatives and/or teachers.

STUDENTS CONCERNS
Top 3 causes of mental health issues faced by students
1. Relationship issues
The pandemic has tested many young relationships. Partners were unexpectedly separated from each other and led to breakups.
2. Low confidence and self-esteem
Many were left anxious and worried about the impact the pandemic would have on their career prospects and placements.
There was of course the ever-present anxiety of them or a loved one contracting the virus.
Many fought feelings of loneliness and isolation brought on by lockdown and strict social distancing.
All these directly led to fall in their self-esteem and confidence
3. Loss of work-life balance
Many students found themselves either not focusing enough on their academic work or focusing so much that it seemed to consume other aspects of their lives.
WAYS TO PROTECT MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS AND YOUTH

★ Individual level:  
We need to empower our youth and help them become more resilient individuals.  
For this, institutions must introduce stress management training, physical activity programmes, and e-courses for self-help, and of course, professional therapy support.

★ Community level:  
These consist of communities like academic course batches, etc. academic institutes must make it mandatory for students to undergo training in psychological first aid and suicide gatekeeping.  
The goal is to build peer support and a caring community culture.

★ Organizational level:  
Whether it be at the academic institutional level, or at the governmental level, we need to make sure that youth mental health is the agenda at the leadership level.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Although unprecedented times like these foster anxiety, these steps should be followed by every individual to overcome the unforeseen.

RE- THINKING ABOUT IT SLIGHTLY DIFFERENTLY
Give yourself time and space to get clarity on your thoughts
Stay connected and share your concerns with your family, friends and teachers
Focus on the positive side that you are able to notice (ex: More time to prepare well)

TIME MANAGEMENT
Time management is vital to one’s mental health
Fix a daily routine and stick to it and make a to-do list by setting smart and realistic goals
Maintain sleep hygiene and follow a regular sleep and wake time everyday
Caffeine should not be ingested in the evening
Heavy meals, drinking water just before bedtime and daytime naps should also be avoided.
Eat healthy, wholesome food. Reduce sugar and junk foods
Refrain from using electronics in bed

MAKE USE OF THE OPPORTUNITY AT HAND
Enroll yourselves for online courses of your interest
Develop new hobbies and skills
Decluttering and prioritization of tasks
APPROPRIATE SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE
Avoid excessive usage of electronic gadgets and social media
The mantra to be followed is appropriate usage for appropriate time

MANAGING YOUR STRESS
Try deep breathing and meditation
Take out time for Physical exercise,
Yoga, gardening, painting, dancing etc
Regular exercise releases happy hormones.

BEAT STIGMA AND SEEK SUPPORT
If your feelings are overwhelming and unable to handle the situation seek support
by contacting mental health professionals or counselors
Remember that “This too shall pass”
Children with disabilities might be troubled more in the current situation. They might not be able
to express what they need or what they are going through. They might need extra effort and
support. Be receptive about their condition and do as much as possible to reduce their
discomfort. Monitor their activities, mood and behavior as much as possible. Be aware about
any changes in routine way of functioning.

IF ANXIETY IS EXCESSIVE OR UNCONTROLLABLE
Try distraction. Distract yourself with hobbies and recreational activities.
Grounding techniques can be practiced in stressful situations.
Try something new as a means of distraction.
You can use grounding techniques to help create space from
distressing feelings in nearly any situation, like
The technique using the five senses.

★ search for five things they can see
★ search for four things they can touch
★ search for three things they can hear
★ search for two things they can smell
★ search for one thing they can taste

Sensory grounding techniques may include:

★ smelling food or flowers
★ holding an object, such as a rock or a leaf, in the hands
★ listening to music or the noise of traffic outside
Contact mental health professionals through COVID helpline 1075

MENTAL HEALTH OF ELDERLY

SPEND TIME WITH FAMILY
Spending quality time with family, getting involved in family discussions
If staying away try to connect through video calls/phone calls

GETTING INVOLVED IN DAILY ACTIVITIES
Keep doing small activities at home like gardening, cooking, cleaning

SPEND TIME IN RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES
Engage in activities like solving puzzles, board games, listening to music, reading
This will reduce boredom

MAKE SOME TIME FOR EXERCISE
It is important to be physically active. Stretching exercise, yoga, walking indoors, meditation

CONNECTING TO LOVED ONES
Connect with your children and grandchildren

CUT DOWN LISTENING TO NEWS
Filter out reliable news, news reports may be upsetting and misleading

SYMPTOMS OF OMICRON VIRUS
Most of the Omicron variant patients are asymptomatic. Symptoms of the omicron variant are less severe as compared to delta variant and the need for hospitalization is less.

- Low-grade fever
- Pain and itchiness in the throat
- Cough
- Loss of taste and smell (less common)
- General weakness and tiredness
- Headache
- Severe body pain which interferes in any work
- Diarrhea
- Skin rashes

It may cause reinfection in people who have already recovered from the COVID-19 disease or are vaccinated for COVID, important to mention here is that vaccination has played a crucial role in controlling the spread and the severity of disease is low in the vaccinated individuals.

PRECAUTIONS TO PROTECT ONESELF FROM GETTING INFECTED

DO NOT compromise with the recommended precautions and guidelines issued by the government from time to time and follow COVID appropriate behavior,
With the advances in the mental health scenario in the past year, it is noteworthy to know that seeking help for mental health concerns is crucial to maintaining a holistic health profile. One should never hesitate to approach a mental health professional. It is advisable to reach mental health counseling and COVID helpline number 1075

COVID HELPLINE NUMBER 1075