

Life in the time of COVID-19

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NH Wood



We are collectively, and as individuals, faced with a situation in which numerous foci of tension is directed towards us that cover a spectrum of stressors that may include health, financial and/or psychological matters. Many of us are turning to our individual coping mechanisms whilst still considering the looming, perhaps rhetorical question: "What's going to happen?"

Braun-Lewensohn and Sagy explained that an individual's ability to use external and internal resources to cope not only influences the way in which that individual perceives challenges, but has a direct influence on how well that individual will cope with the particular stressors.¹

Some consider that a strong sense of coherence confers a coping advantage on a person faced by a stressor, in that it prevents this tension to convert into stress. This theory, referred to as the salutogenic model, was first described by Antonovsky² as a cross-cultural concept that takes appropriate resources available to different cultures into consideration.

This ability, or a stronger sense of coherence, is believed to lower anxiety or anger during these challenging times. It is therefore beneficial to identify those internal and external resources that one draws on as protective factors. These range from different levels of interpersonal relationships, hobbies and activities, physical activity and routines, to the religious, psychologic and other relevant group interactions to name but a few.

We are all awaiting the outcome of the 21 day lockdown period, and I remain hopeful that the rate of infection of the SARS-CoV-2 virus will decrease. This titanic effort, along with our own personal actions and contributions, all aim at reducing the risk of overwhelming our healthcare system.

Reducing the numbers of new infections, or flattening the curve of new cases, provides our healthcare facilities and staff the space to cope with the COVID-19 burden. In addition to that, we all need to play a further part to "flatten the baseline", that is, to reduce accidents and emergencies as much as possible to reduce pressure on healthcare systems.

Thank you to our contributors for a stimulating April issue of the SADJ. To all our readers: please remain vigilant and be reminded of the Department of Health Corona virus hotline: 0800 029 9999. During this challenging time, in addition to looking towards our various echelons in leadership positions, let us also engage



one another in an effort to be a supportive and caring community. Please stay safe during the COVID-19 lockdown, and I hope that we will all have the opportunity to reflect on this time together once it is over.



"We will only fight Coronavirus in South Africa with facts and evidence-based strategies, not fake news".

- Dr Zweli Mkhize,
Minister of Health,
press conference
01 April 2020

References

1. Braun-Lewensohn O, Sagy S. Salutogenesis and culture: Personal and community sense of coherence among adolescents belonging to three different cultural groups, *International Review of Psychiatry*. 2011; 23(6): 533-41.
2. Antonovsky A. *Unraveling the mystery of health*. San Francisco, CA. 1987: Jossey-Bass.