

Counselor's Corner
January 18, 2021

Peace of Mind in Chaotic Times

Pandemic related anxiety and depression have risen considerably in recent months according to psychiatrist, Dr. Sue Varma. Symptoms include difficulty sleeping and a spike in feelings of fear and uncertainty. Additionally, changes in mood, appetite or energy, lack of concentration or memory recall, and feeling guilty or unmotivated have afflicted adults and children alike.

Combatting stress takes determined effort, and Dr. Varma suggests practicing the “4M's of Mental Health” to alleviate symptoms:

- 1) Movement – doing anything fun that gets the body moving for at least 20 minutes – walking, cycling or playing sports. This activity will help break the cycle of symptoms, and raise endorphin levels in the brain.
- 2) Meaningful Engagement with people – having open conversations with family or friends and sharing vulnerability, without spending too much time on negative talk.
- 3) Mindfulness – spend at least 10 minutes a day to practice deep breathing to relax the mind and body. Doing this outside in nature is even better.
- 4) Mastery – do something creative and enjoyable to engage the brain and focus on the activity rather than ruminating over anxious or depressive thoughts.

Note that anxiety and depression can coexist, and are exacerbated by isolation and inability to engage in usual activities without numerous precautions. And as always, seek professional help if these efforts are insufficient to alleviate ongoing symptoms.

