



**COVID-19 MESSAGES FOR
PREGNANT AND POSTNATAL WOMEN**

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MENTAL HEALTH





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CO-AUTHORS AND REVIEWERS



1. COPING WITH STRESS AS A MOTHER DURING COVID-19

As a mother, you could be having a lot of stress and worries during COVID-19.

Here are some 6 tips for coping with stress during this time.

You can do this!

1. Notice, name and accept your feelings. They are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.
2. Limit how often you check the news if it is feeling too much.
3. Get your facts from reliable sources only. There is lot of fake news.
4. Do simple things to take your mind off this situation.
5. Ask for support from family, friends or a counsellor.
6. If you can, helping others during this time can make you feel better.

Helplines (keep trying they may be busy)

- South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) www.sadag.org – has many helplines 0800 21 22 23 or 0800 456 789 or 0800 20 5026 and others
- Lifeline general 0861 322 322 and their AIDS Helpline 0800 012 322
- Childline 0800 055 555

2. COPING WITH FAMILY VIOLENCE DURING COVID-19

Being at home during COVID-19 can result in an increase in violence towards women and children. If this applies to you, here are some tips for coping:

1. Have a safety plan. Keep your phone charged and with airtime. Put emergency numbers in your phone. Have an emergency bag ready. Tell your children the plan.
2. You can ask the police for a protection order.
3. Self-care. Get enough sleep, eat properly, exercise. Do what helps you to take your mind off the stress.
4. Connect with friends, family, a support group or a counsellor online or on the phone
5. Remember - you deserve to be safe. It is your right.

Helplines (keep trying they may be busy)

- GBV Command Centre Call 0800 428 428; Send a “Please Call Me” by dialling *120*7867# SMS ‘help’ to 31531
- People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) www.powa.co.za tel: 0800 029 999
- Lifeline’s Domestic Violence line 0800 150 150
- Tears Foundation www.tears.co.za tell dial *134*7355# or 010 590 5920
- Rape Crisis 021 447 9762 ; WhatsApp 083 222 5164
- South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) www.sadag.org – has many helplines 0800 21 22 23 or 0800 456 789 or 0800 20 5026 and others

3. COPING WITH DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND ADDICTIONS DURING COVID-19

In the time of COVID-19, people who are already living with depression, anxiety or an addiction may be feeling worse. This is understandable.

1. If you are on medication, don't change it without talking with your doctor.
2. If you have a counsellor, make a plan to talk over the phone or online.
3. If you don't have a counsellor, and are feeling bad, phone a helpline
- see options below.
4. Explore the internet for help online.
5. Remember alcohol or drugs will make you feel worse afterwards.
6. Get support. Reach out to friends and family online or on the phone.
7. Look after yourself. Don't judge yourself. You can get through this.

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- Lifeline general 0861 322 322 and their AIDS Helpline 0800 012 322
- SANCA for Alcohol and Drug problems WhatsApp line 076 535 1701
- Childline 0800 055 555

4. HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE WORRYING TOO MUCH?

Everyone is worried during this difficult time of COVID-19. This is a normal way of reacting to a very abnormal situation. But, for some people, the worry, stress and fear can become too much. How can you tell if you are worrying too much?

- You are extremely worried about getting COVID-19 (even though you are doing things to keep safe like staying inside, keeping distance from others and washing your hands often)
- You are unable to sleep because you can't stop worrying
- You read social media messages or listen to the news about COVID-19 all the time
- You can't relax or stop worrying
- You are always afraid that something terrible is going to happen
- You are irritable with others for no reason
- You are unable to cope with the usual things you need to do around the house like get dressed, cook or clean
- You feel tense in your neck, shoulders or back, or have an upset stomach due to constant worry

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5. HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE DEPRESSED?

It is normal to be worried during this difficult time of COVID-19. Sometimes the worry or stress, or just not being able to see other people, can lead to depression. How will you know if you are depressed? Here are some things to look out for:

- You feel down, depressed or hopeless
- You are ‘thinking too much’
- You have very negative thoughts that upset you
- You feel that you do not want to talk to other people even though you could phone or WhatsApp them
- You feel that you do not want to do the usual things that you would do round the house, like get dressed, clean and cook
- You can’t relax
- You feel tired all the time
- Nothing brings you joy
- You have thoughts or even plans to harm yourself or commit suicide

If you have a few of these symptoms for over two weeks, please speak to someone.

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6. HOW DO I DEAL WITH CHANGES IN HOW SERVICES WORK?

The situation with COVID-19 is very difficult and has led to many changes in how services work. You might face difficulties at a clinic, police station or when you use health or social services. Service providers are also trying to manage with new ways of doing things and they may not always know what the newest rules are. This can be stressful for them and you. If you can prepare to adapt, it can make it easier to cope during this time. It may help to think about how you got through difficult times in the past.

7. HOW SHOULD I DEAL WITH SUICIDAL AND DISTURBING THOUGHTS DURING COVID-19?

During these difficult times, some mothers may have unwanted, disturbing thoughts. Some may feel so bad that they think of suicide.

Do you:

- Feel sad and hopeless most of the time?
- Not enjoy anything?
- Want to be left alone?
- See no way out of your situation?
- Think things will be better if you are not around?
- Think of ways to hurt yourself?
- Feel afraid that you may hurt your baby or child?
- Have thoughts about harming your baby or child?

If you feel like this, reach out and talk to someone. These thoughts can change and get better.

Get professional help. Speak to a counsellor, nurse, doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist. Mental healthcare is an essential service during lockdown.

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