

Pandemic Flu Emergency: Managing Your Emotions

**Counseling Services
109 Murphy Hall
336-334.7727
M-F, 8-5 pm**

Public health emergency, such as pandemic flu, can have a powerful effect upon the mental health of individuals of all ages. Most people naturally become alarmed and upset when they believe that their health may be threatened. However, during these times of heightened concerns regarding public health risks, it is vitally important to take care of yourself and monitor your own emotional reactions. Attending to your own mental health and emotional needs will make you a better, more reliable resource for friends, colleagues, and loved ones in helping them to better handle their concerns.

People will react in their own way to a pandemic flu outbreak.

Normal reactions include:

Physical

- Headaches, tiredness
- Fast pulse, high blood pressure
- Changes in appetite
- Unexplained aches or pains
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much

Behavioral

- Avoiding others
- Increased substance abuse
- Excessive cleaning or washing
- Being overly cautious, jumpiness

Emotional

- Panic, anxiety
- Distrust, fear
- Anger, irritability
- Sadness, depression
- Blame
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Increased stress

Mental

- Trouble concentrating
- Problems with work or school
- Memory problems
- Troubling thoughts that won't go away
- Concern about health issues

Here are some ways you can cope with stress and anxiety:

- Limit your exposure to graphic news stories
- Get accurate, timely information from reliable sources
- Educate yourself about the specific health hazards associated with pandemic flu
- Maintain your normal daily routine to the extent possible
- Exercise, eat well, and rest
- Stay active—physically and mentally
- Stay in touch with family and friends
- Find comfort in your spiritual and personal beliefs
- Keep a sense of humor
- Find healthy ways to express your feelings

Stay Connected

People who are normally close to friends and family may avoid contact because they are afraid they might get sick. The fear associated with a pandemic flu emergency can push people apart.

University Student Health Center staff (336-334-7880) will tell you how to protect yourself and your loved ones. Until then, stay connected by phone, email, and by visiting Counseling Services or Sebastian Student Health Center.

If you notice a big change in a loved one, friend, or co-worker, reach out to them. Make some time to talk. Look for ways to care for and about others. It can be comforting to both of you.

If you or someone you know is having a hard time managing their emotions, seek help from a medical or mental health professional. Counseling Services is here for you.

Get Reliable Information

When uncertain about health risks, it is important to keep things in perspective.

Get information during a public health emergency from: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

For more information about Managing your Anxiety: <http://apahelpcenter.org/>