

Let's Support One Another During COVID-19



People's fears and worries are naturally heightened with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) ravaging the world. In uncertain times like these, people often look for something or someone to blame. The COVID-19 outbreak has provoked social stigma and discriminatory behaviours against people of certain ethnic backgrounds and those perceived to have been in contact with the virus.

On an individual level, this kind of bias can make people feel isolated, depressed, hurt or angry. On a community and wider level, it can contribute to a situation where the virus is more likely to spread by:

- Driving people to hide the illness to avoid discrimination
- Preventing people from seeking healthcare
- Discouraging people from adopting healthy behaviours

Especially in times like these, we need to support one another and work together to combat COVID-19 and the spread of bias. Here are some ways you can help:

Step 1: Combat bias

- **Celebrate diversity.** No person, ethnicity, nationality or specific group is to blame for COVID-19. A coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 causes COVID-19. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals.
- **Applaud frontline workers.** Emergency responders and healthcare professionals are waging a battle against the pandemic. They are risking their lives to help save lives, and it is important for us all to respect and honour their dedication.
- **Be empathetic to those who have been infected.** Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation is not known to pose a risk of infection to other people. Also, their experiences overcoming the disease often provide valuable information to researchers and healthcare professionals helping to fight this disease.
- **Show compassion to those who choose not to return to work.** Remember that everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. If you personally are considering not returning to work, an important first step is to have a conversation with your employer to learn your options.

Step 2: Take responsibility

- **Protect yourself and others.** Stay home if you are sick, aside from getting medical care. Cover your coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow or a tissue. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, especially mobile phones or remote controls.
- **Speak up.** Challenge negative stereotypes and misconceptions that you hear and see on social media.
- **Share the facts.** Unreliable sources and misinformation can be corrected with trustworthy sources. Point people toward accurate information from sources such as the the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- **Think before you post.** Be conscious of what you are sharing on social media. If it could be misconstrued as offensive, hurtful or aggravating, or have potential negative impacts on others, do not post it.
- **Words matter.** Use inclusive language when speaking about COVID-19 and remove negative language that may propel existing stereotypes. For example, talk about “people who are being treated for COVID-19”. Don’t refer to people with the disease as “COVID-19 cases” or “victims”.
- **Be kind.** Offer support if you think someone is having trouble or being stigmatised. Ask if they need someone to talk to or just want someone to listen. Show support and appreciation for the frontline workers who are working hard to keep us safe.

We are all in this together.

It’s important to know the facts. Help stop the spread of the COVID-19 disease and bias. Help protect the physical and mental health of our loved ones, friends, communities and the world.

Sources:

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