



Suggestions for Using Peer Support in a Large-Scale Event

- Regular routines are likely to be disrupted during the large-scale event, like a pandemic, and may result in increased demands from the job, family and community.
- One's ability to access their usual "go-to" coping strategies may be significantly decreased or eliminated during these times.
- Maintaining regular levels of activity, including; physical, social and other personal pursuits may not be possible due to personal safety, mandated closures or increased demands on time.

These factors may make it a challenge when exploring an individual's "mechanisms of action" for coping with stress.

Below are a few pointers for how to account for a disruption in accessing one's usual "mechanisms of action."

We want to remind you of "PIE plus";

- Proximity
- Immediacy
- Expectancy



- Brief
- Simple
- Pragmatic
- Innovative

The following describes PIE plus and how to adjust the peer interaction when large scale events impact people on a larger scale for a longer duration.

Proximity: peer support can be done over the phone, skype, zoom, facetime, or face-to-face in a place that allows for adequate social distancing and maintaining confidentiality.

Immediacy: offer support as soon as there is a need.

Expectancy: normalize stress reactions and provide practical and realistic expectations for positive outcomes.

Brief: keep your contacts brief. Remember, peer support longer than 20 minutes provides no added benefit and may reduce its effectiveness.

Simple: keep it simple. The details of the cause of stress are less important than the impact of stress. Stress makes it hard to make sense of complex conversations or plans. Encourage the development of a simple plan for coping, at least to start.

Pragmatic: Don't encourage coping strategies that set them up to fail – the action plan has to be practical given the circumstances, limitations, as well as realistic to be followed through on.

Innovative: given recommendations for social distancing and isolation, as well as taking into account facility closures, encourage those impacted to think of ways to adapt their usual coping strategies.



Here are a few examples for adapting coping strategies during a large-scale event:

Physical Activity:

“I don’t have access to the gym or facilities”

- YouTube Videos on activities, Fitness Apps & Virtual Fitness Coaching.
- Walks, hikes & outdoor activities are not only good for the body but for mental health too.
- Set up a group chat to encourage getting in motion together or set a challenge. Use what you have available. It may not be optimal, but it is better than not being active.

Social Supports:

“My friends and family are my supports and it’s not safe to see them face-to-face for get-togethers”

- FaceTime, Skype, Phone Calls for Virtual get-togethers.
- Multi-player virtual gaming.
- Visit chatting on a cell phone with a window or barrier between you and a vulnerable member of the population.

Healthy Eating:

“Stress effects my eating habits and makes me feel even worse physically”

- Plan ahead, have staples and food supplies on-hand taking into account availability and accessibility. Stock the shelves with healthy choices and avoid loading filling your shelves and then yourself with the unhealthy options.
- Check to see if delivery of groceries is available locally. Make arrangements in your community to get your groceries dropped-off. Difficult time usually brings out people’s willingness to help.
- Check to see if groceries can be pre-ordered and ready for pick-up. This will assist in reducing the unnecessary risk of exposure to the virus in public places.
- Pre-ordering groceries might be an option. This allows for strategic choices about your diet. You might even consider ensuring you pre-order when stress and cravings are low so to ensure you avoid your stress reaction drawing you towards the unhealthy options.

Balanced Sleep:

“When I try to sleep my mind takes over and worries about the future and all that could happen to me or my family”

- 22 minutes of getting your body in motion before going to sleep will help reduce the amount of stress hormones in your system. This will ensure you get restful, restorative sleep allowing your body to more effectively repair itself from the wear and tear of the day.
- Stick to your regular sleep routine. Getting up and going to bed at the same time helps your body resist the effects of stress.
- Shift into “rest mode” prior to bedtime by doing a few simple things, such as: relaxation techniques, meditating, reading a book, listening to music. Avoid the temptation to look at screens as the blue light they emit activates the brain instead of quieting it down.

Keep to a Routine:

“My routine has been thrown out of whack and nothing I do helps get it back. Everything that I did that works isn’t possible anymore”

- We are creatures of habit and routine. Rigid routines cause stress as do disrupted routines. In a world of uncertainty, routines can ground us and help our system cope with stress. Eating, sleeping, and activities are important routines not to disrupt. Control what you can and do some aspect of your routine.
- You may be required to take on extra shifts or overtime, disrupting your routine. See if you can find a few things within the added workload that are part of your normal routines. It may be difficult but not impossible. If you find it’s not possible while operational, return to a routine as soon as your shift or tour is over.