



**MURANG'A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE  
GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING OFFICE**

**MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AS WE DEAL WITH CORONA  
VIRUS PANDEMIC**

**INTRODUCTION**

We are all aware that mental health issues are now a big concern in Kenya. Depression cases have been on the rise, suicidal ideations and attempts by the young and the old have also been on the rise. In addition, alcohol and substance abuse is used as a coping mechanism among many other issues and corona Virus pandemic is not making things any better. Our lives have been greatly interrupted, its not business as usual. Our daily work and school routine is not the same any more. Corona Virus has affected us in a great ways and this is obviously going to affect our mental well being. How well do we protect ourselves from mental break down? What do we need to know? This article will help you get more information on mental health and what you need to know to prevent mental breakdown, know yourself better and make the right decision as we deal with Covid 19 Pandemic.

**Mental Health Awareness**

A state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, to cope with the normal stresses of life, to work productively and be able to make a contribution to his or her life. State of well being here refers to psychological, social and emotional wellbeing

**Good Mental health benefits/important of having good mental health**

1. Reduced anxiety and happy moments increases
2. Reduces stress
3. Clear and rational thinking
4. Greater sense of calmness
5. Increased self esteem
6. Reduced risk of depression

**NB:**

Mental illness usually ends up affecting people ability to participate in healthy behaviors since it affects how a person thinks, feels and acts/behaves

**Warning signs of mental illness**

1. Long-lasting sadness or irritability



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2. Extremely high and low moods
3. Excessive fear, worry or anxiety
4. Social withdrawal
5. Drug and substance abuse/ Drug Addiction
6. Dramatic changes in eating and sleeping habits

**How can one be mentally healthy?**

1. Value yourself and know your worth
2. Take care of your body eating habits
3. Surround yourself with good people
4. Deal with stress positively and be able to recognize positive stress ( Eustress) and Negative stress ( Distress)
5. Set realistic goals
6. Avoid alcohol and drug abuse
7. Get help when you need. It’s okay not to be okay! Talk to people who you trust

**What is the difference between a disease and a disorder**

Disease	Disorder
A definite pathological process having a characteristic set of signs and symptoms. It's caused by extrinsic factors e.g. viruses and bacteria	A disturbance that affects the functions of mind or body Caused by intrinsic factor e.g. birth defects, genetics etc

**Types of mental illness/disorder**

**1. Mood disorders**

Mood disorder is a broad term that's used to include all the different types of **depression** and bipolar disorder, both of which affect your mood. If you have symptoms of a mood disorder, your moods may range from extremely low (depressed) to extremely high or irritable (manic).

- Major depressive disorder – Prolonged and persistent periods of extreme sadness
- Bipolar Disorder – also called manic depression or Bipolar affective disorder, depression that includes alternating times of depression and mania

**2. Anxiety Disorders**

**Anxiety disorders** are a group of mental **disorders** characterized by significant feelings of **anxiety** and fear. **Anxiety** is a worry about future events, and fear is a reaction to current events presently the Corona Virus. These feelings may cause physical **symptoms**, such as a fast heart rate and shakiness

**Example**

1. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which is as a result of witnessing or experiencing terrifying/painful event such as death of a significant person. Others are: rape, sodomy, accident among others that result painful experiences.
2. Panic attack - There may be a fear of losing control or chest pain
3. Social phobia or social anxiety disorder - Excessive self-consciousness and anxiety in everyday social situations. Extreme fear of being watched or



judged by others, especially people you don't know. Fear that you'll act in ways that will embarrass or humiliate yourself.

4. **Generalized anxiety disorder** - A person feels anxious on most days, worrying about lots of different things
5. **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder** - Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is excessive thoughts that lead to repetitive behaviors e.g. current situation, fear of catching the virus and washing of hands to avoid contamination by germs or dirt or contaminating others. It becomes a disorder when a person is unable to control the thought and activity especially if it affects a person's life negatively.

### 3. Personality disorders

Personality is the way of thinking, feeling and behaving that makes a person different which is influenced by experience, environment and inherited characteristics. Example antisocial personality – have disregard of rights of others

#### A. Avoidant personality disorder

It refers to a widespread pattern of inhibition around people, feeling inadequate and being very sensitive to negative evaluation

Dependent personality disorder desire and need to be taken care of and difficulty in making daily decisions

#### B. Histrionic personality disorder

Self-centeredness, feeling uncomfortable when not the center of attention. Constantly seeking reassurance or approval. Inappropriately seductive appearance or behavior

Excessive emotions and attention seeking

#### C. Narcissistic

Personality disorder, characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance and the need for constant attention, an individual need for admiration and lack of empathy for others. A feeling of self importance and takes advantage of others and lacks empathy

**D. Borderline - Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)** is a condition characterized by difficulties regulating emotion. This means that people who experience Borderline Personality Disorder feel emotions intensely and for extended periods of time, and it is harder for them to return to a stable baseline after an emotionally triggering event.

### 4. Psychotic disorders

- **Psychotic disorders** are severe mental disorders that cause abnormal thinking and perceptions. People with psychoses lose touch with reality. Two of the main symptoms are delusions and hallucinations
- Abnormal thinking and perception hence losing touch with reality e.g. delusional and hallucinations e.g. schizophrenia
- **Delusion** - An impression maintained despite being contradicted by reality or rational argument, typically as a symptom of mental disorder
- **Hallucinations** - an experience involving the apparent perception of something not present.

### 5. Eating disorders



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Individuals with eating disorders have unhealthy eating habits which includes; obsession with food, body weight and body shape. As we deal with effect of corona virus, its important to note that different people deal with stressful situation differently. Some people tend to overeat while other avoid food completely. Where do you fall? Be informed!

Example

1. Anorexia nervosa – eating disorder that is associated with inability to maintain normal weight. An individual with this disorder usually has intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat even though they are underweight.
2. Bulimia nervosa – eating large amounts of food then purge ( trying to get rid of the extra calories in an unhealthy way.
3. Pica – eating things that are not considered food
4. Ruminating – this is most common in children where the children rechews partially digested food that has already been swallowed

#### 6. Substance abuse disorders/ Drug addictions

This affects a person brain and behaviour which leads to inability to control the use of legal and illegal drug e.g. alcohol abuse, marijuana nicotine etc.

### CONCLUSION

**With all this information what do you need to do as a person?**

Develop:

#### **Intelligence quotient**

- A standard measure of an individual's **intelligence** level based on **psychological** tests. ... Additional data are often derived from **IQ** tests, such as performance speed, freedom from distractibility, verbal comprehension, and perceptual organization indices.
- A person's reasoning ability (measured using problem-solving tests) (comprehensive ability to solve maths, memorize things and recall objects)

#### **Emotional quotient**

- The level of a person's emotional intelligence.
- Your ability to maintain peace with others, be genuine, humble and handle your emotions well

#### **Social quotient**

- Others call it social maturity
- Ability to build network with people and be able to maintain it for long

#### **Adversity quotient**

- Ability to go through rough moments in life and come out without losing your mind. This is where we are now. How are we able to cope with covid 19 pandemic?

Adversity determines

- Those who will give up in face of troubles/issues In life
- Those who will abandon themselves
- Those who will consider suicide



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Basically how resilience are you – capacity to recover quickly from difficult situations in life. Will corona pandemic affect your mental stability or you going to be stronger than before?

***For Guidance and Counselling kindly contact us via [counsellor@mut.ac.ke](mailto:counsellor@mut.ac.ke). Indicating registration number/PF, year of study if a student, brief description of the issue and contact. Kindly note counselling cases only or you can call Murangá University of Technology Counsellors; Dr. Asige Chavulimu 072362477 or Ms. Runnoh Goretti 0724742281.***



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