How you can handle the impact of Covid-19 on your mental health

The following article is written by Anna Chandy, Chairperson, The Live Love Laugh Foundation

The Covid-19 pandemic has sent half the world into lockdown with people compelled to remain indoors for weeks on end. The authorities have outlined two critical measures in the Covid-19 battle - ‘Social Distancing’ for all and ‘Self-Quarantining’ (in case one is likely to have come in contact with others who may have had the disease).

Social distancing is different from social isolation. Even when we are ‘social distancing’ we remain connected emotionally with the outside world. It is important to begin to problem-solve to manage the social, financial, and personal challenges in a well-thought out, structured and positive way.

There are a number of ways in which the lockdown can impact people and we can take steps to reduce adverse impact.

Losing a job or suffering financial losses due to business disruptions is a major cause of worry. But, careful planning, seeking help from mental health experts and relaxation/meditation activities can bring down stress.

There are going to be sectors and job profiles that will see greater traction once Covid-19 infections start fading away. This is a good time to reset your short to medium term financial plans. This time provides us the opportunity to acquire skills or new knowledge.

It is also possible to revitalize personal bonding when one is with family members 24/7 but it is also important to respect personal space and boundaries of parents, siblings, spouse or children.

A major challenge that can cause a lot of fatigue and mental stress, is the merger of the on-duty and off-duty hours. Irrespective of the fact that you are working from home, try to follow the same work schedule that you normally do at office. Set clear boundaries.

An enforced lockdown and underlying fears of the viral makes people worried about keeping their family members and senior citizens safe, especially those with pre-existing health conditions. We must use the lockdown time to forge stronger bonds with our family members while ensuring that this round the clock proximity doesn’t cause conflict and mental stress to the family members.
The long home lockdown is likely to play havoc with people who are used to active lifestyles. Not being able to go to work, school or college is going to impact various age groups. It can cause stress, irritability and depression. However, we must encourage each other to understand the need of social distancing and lockdown. Regular exercise, meditation, yoga and interaction among family members are things that can keep all of us safe.

Extraordinary times often require unusual responses. The Covid-19 induced lockdown is one such scenario that none of us was prepared for. Still, we must handle it with care and ensure that our personal and professional lives continue as smoothly as possible!