



Mental Health & Coping Challenges and Strategies Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study

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The Story of Jane: A Case Study

- Jane is a 15-year old black pregnant teen who resides with her ailing grandmother who is on a fixed income. Jane is a sophomore in high school and gets good grades. There is not enough money to make ends meet. She works odd jobs to help her grandmother with the household bills. The only type of employment she can find is babysitting, house sitting, and dog walking due to her age. On March 13, 2020, the world stopped in its tracks as the coronavirus pandemic hit. Delaware residents are ordered by Governor Carney to shelter in place. Days turn to weeks and weeks turn to months. As time goes by, Jane's grandmother became sick and ultimately is placed in a nursing home. With no way to pay rent, or access food banks because Jane does not have a car and is too young to drive. Jane becomes homeless couch surfing with friends as long as she can until she ends up on the street. Jane's story goes from bad to worse...

The Story of Jane: A Case Study (con't)

- Jane has no street skills or coping skills. Jane is unable to shelter in place, unable to keep her hands clean or wear masks as required. Jane is lonely, grieving the loss of her grandmother who was her only support. Jane's desperate need for shelter, food and love accepts readily when an older gentleman who tells her she is pretty and he will take care of her. Jane at her most vulnerable and desperate need for shelter begins living with the gentleman. The gentleman who is a drug addict and is unknowingly caring COVID-19 becomes abusive and introduces Jane to drugs. Jane becomes addicted. She is now on the street trying to make enough money for both their drugs. Jane passes out in an abandoned building. A passerby sees Jane. The passerby calls the police and ambulance noting that Jane has been abused as her lips and eyes are swollen. He also noted she is pregnant. Jane is taken to the hospital. The police give the attending nurse what information he has concerning Jane. Jane is diagnosed positive for COVID and a decision was made to take the baby via C-section. Jane recovers. The nurse who is a kindhearted individual goes beyond her job duties as a nurse an essential worker, uses what resources are available during this time, finds shelter for Jane, clothes, food and assist Jane with virtual parenting classes to assist Jane with reuniting with her baby. This could have ended tragically! Jane and the baby could have died.

Psychosocial Risks & Challenges Faced by the Community During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- ❖ Social Isolation, loneliness (scientific research links isolation to negative physical and mental health impact)
- ❖ Negative impact of sheltering in place
- ❖ Decline in coping ability
- ❖ Increased mental health distress: fear/anxiety /stress/depression is a quite common MH Condition
- ❖ Fear/anxiety, personal health status and those of loved ones
- ❖ Financial distress/Job loss (associated distress and low self-esteem)
- ❖ People with mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders/relapse exacerbated
- ❖ Increased distress in relationships i.e. domestic violence/Intimate Partner Violence/i.e. child abuse/neglect risk

Psychosocial Risks & Challenges Faced by the Community During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- ❖ Increased risk related in the Social Determinants of Health i.e. food Insecurity, loss of housing, rationed and/or limited access to basic resources; etc.
- ❖ Decrease in availability of and/or access to community support and educational services(i.e. loss of funding /mandated closures, etcetera. Examples: Neighborhood Senior Center closures; day-care closures/schools moving to virtual/technology based only(negatively impacts those without ability to afford technology/wi-fi access/etc.
- ❖ Community division and conflict, contributed to by the current political climate

Impact of Exacerbation of Stressors Associated with COVID-19 Pandemic

- ❖ Fear in seeking medical treatment & testing
 - ❖ Stigma associated with testing positive and disclosing to others
 - ❖ Some individuals at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 i.e. older adults/ people of any age with underlying health conditions
 - ❖ Isolation and disruption in family support caused by Coronavirus illness in hospitals/care facilities
 - ❖ School closures/virtual home schooling/homework
 - ❖ Heightened impact in communities of color, already often facing health disparities and systemic oppression & structural racism
 - ❖ Major impact on important life events and life milestones:
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- ❖ Cultural & ritualistic activities impacted for all ethnic and cultural groups: examples (marriages/weddings, graduations, milestone birthdays, death/burials, child- birth)

Suggestions for Positive Coping Strategies

- ❖ Limit News Media viewing/Coronavirus (It's good to sometimes turn off the news. Too much can lead to mental overload and!)
- ❖ Reach out to assist/care for vulnerable persons
- ❖ Engage family and/or other community supports ** Example: Faith -based support,
- ❖ Give children a way to express their feelings: fear/sadness/isolation from school/friends/etcetera.
- ❖ Virtual outreach & connection
- ❖ Public Health Mitigation Coping Strategies:
 - ❖ Visit outdoors/have space that allows for safe social distancing
 - ❖ Find creative ways to celebrate events that have significance (ex. Drive by parades to celebrate birthdays/graduations, social media watch parties)
 - ❖ Be creative with face coverings (recycle old t-shirts to make masks , if there are enough financial resources coordinate face coverings to match your favorite outfit(s))
- ❖ Seek Help/Community Resources