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Priority: HIGH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Simple Coping Strategies for Families During Covid-19 Pandemic

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services understands that being separated from others if a healthcare provider thinks you may have been exposed to COVID-19 can be stressful, even if you do not get sick. Everyone feels differently after coming out of quarantine. Among these feelings may include mixed emotions, including relief after quarantine as well as stress from the experience of monitoring yourself or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Additionally, persons may have feelings of sadness, anger, or frustration because friends or loved ones have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious. Others may feel guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties during the quarantine period.

Just the fear of contracting COVID 19 may pose high levels of stress and anxiety. Persons under stress may exhibit the following:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Psychologists recommend that we take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting. Persons undergoing stress and anxiety should also take care of their bodies. This may include taking deep breaths, stretching or meditating, try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs. Persons must also make time to unwind and try to do some other activities they generally enjoy. According to Psychologist, Dr Diane Douglas: “It is important we call a family meeting to explain and get agreements on schedules and activities. Children

now need closer supervision from cyber threats. For those who may get angry or frustrated because of the confined space, it is time to take a “time out” so you can remove yourself from the room, possibly going for a walk etc, but limit this to one hour after which you re-engage.”

Persons are also encouraged to connect with others as talking with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling helps to bring a sense of relief.

There are many things parents can do to support their children during this time:

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family’s exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to its remit of promoting healthy functioning families and building the resilience of the population and takes this opportunity to remind persons that it stands ready to provide psychosocial support, counselling and requisite referrals and advice to individuals and families as necessary. For further information, persons may also call the Ministry’s hotline at 800 - 1MSD.

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For more information:

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