Mental Health Package during Quarantine: A “MASS SUPPORT” Approach

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This mental health support package has primarily been developed for quarantine centers; however, this can be used for mental health support in similar situations including home quarantine.
Introduction

Story of Ramesh

Going back to the village, meeting his family members were distant dreams for Ramesh. Due to the lockdown across the country, Ramesh had been stuck in Surat for more than a month without any job. With only a month’s salary paid by the employer, it became difficult for labourers like Ramesh to sustain life in Surat and fear of corona was also overwhelming them. Finally, Ramesh & his friends hired a bus with the money they had left and returned to Bhubaneswar. Alas, as soon as they reached Bhubaneswar, the state government officials took them to a Transient Medical Centre (TMC)/Quarantine centre. Ramesh was furious over it. Had he come back with all these hardships to stay away from home in a quarantine centre?? Ramesh and some of his young friends made the situation chaotic just to make excuses not to stay in the quarantine centre. Madhab Uncle, a colleague of Ramesh in Surat, was observing all these silently from a distance. He came to them and made them understand about the importance of staying in a quarantine centre. He told them, "Look gentlemen, why are you so furious over this petty matter?? It’s a matter of few days only. This quarantine is for the protection of you and your family from the corona infection. You all will be tested for corona virus if you develop symptoms like fever, cough, breathlessness. If you are negative and complete your quarantine period, you can go back to your family. Have patience my boys". Bitan, another friend of Ramesh shouted in anger “what about the poor quality of food and the bad behaviour of the staff of the centre?” Many echoed the same complaint. But Madhab Uncle was all composed and with a smile on his face began to explain, “Ok, now tell me, did you get highest quality of food in every meal and every day at Surat? Leave alone Surat, do you get the best food at your home? No, right? Then why grumble so much? Can’t we do with whatever we are getting for a few days? The staff are trying their best to provide everything necessary for you during this stay. You need to think about them also. They are working here for you without caring for their safety, their comfort and their family.” There was a pin drop silence over this. Perhaps everybody could feel the pressure of the quarantine staff to meet the needs of every inmate.

Ramesh was restless for the few initial days, but after that he adjusted to stay normal in the quarantine centre. Days passed by like a breeze. Today he is going back in his village and his heart happy like a bird. But his friend Bitan was little bit disturbed during his stay in quarantine centre. But all the care-takers at the centre took great care of him and Bitan could manage his stress and anger. Today Bitan is also going back to his village. Both the friends bid good-bye deciding to meet again after this corona pandemic is over.

This is a common story in all the TMCs and both the groups; those staying in quarantine and the managers and helpers of TMCs are stressed due to COVID-19. Due to this many
are mentally disturbed, depressed, angry, irritable, stigmatized and dejected. Some have led to extreme situations like suicide. There is a need to safeguard the mental health of both the quarantined individuals and the quarantine staff, (Reference 1-28)

Before going further into the mental health problem, let us understand the basics about the COVID-19 disease and the concepts of quarantine and isolation in relation to it.

**COVID-19 Disease:**

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a disease which affects the respiratory system and caused by a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). With over 1 crore people infected with the virus worldwide and more than 5 lakh deaths, this pandemic has resulted in an extreme crisis situation. India, being the second most populated country in the world, has already reported over 6 lakh cases and more than 17,000 deaths. Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illnesses. The COVID-19 virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, so it’s important that you also practice respiratory hygiene.

**To prevent infection and to slow transmission of COVID-19, do the following:**

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, or clean them with alcohol-based hand rub.
- Maintain at least 1 metre distance between you and people coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home if you feel unwell.
- Refrain from smoking and other activities that weaken the lungs.
- Practice physical distancing by avoiding unnecessary travel and staying away from large groups of people.
Concept of Quarantine, Isolation, Lockdown and Social distancing

What is quarantine?

**Quarantine** is the separation and restriction of movement or activities of persons who are not ill but who are believed to have been exposed to infection, for the purpose of preventing transmission of diseases. Persons may be quarantined at home or in community-based facilities.
What is isolation?

Isolation means separation of sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick. Isolation is advised for those who have been diagnosed positive for Covid-19 to prevent them from infecting others and they will remain in isolation till they test negative for the virus.

What is lockdown?

A lockdown stops the movement of people and cuts down on the Covid-19 spread. It is usually enforced by a government to slow down the constant flow of people.

What is social distancing?

Social distancing, also called “physical distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice social or physical distancing: Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people. This is a very important practice to reduce infection.

Source: https://www.stlmuni.org/contact-state-senators/
Mental Health during COVID-19 pandemic

As the whole world is gripped with extreme crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the physical healthcare is the highlight, while the mental health is often neglected. The COVID-19 outbreak has forced millions to physically isolate themselves and maintain social distancing. This may lead to some stress among all people but most of it will be mild and manageable. However, some conditions and situations may cause severe distress and lead to adverse consequences like suicide and severe conflict. Since the lockdown started there have been several reports of people committing suicide in quarantine centres all over the country. This is because of inadequate attention being given to mental health. Extensive news coverage, social media scare, incorrect information and irresponsible behaviour by some people result in a state of panic, stress, anxiety, and depression, making the situation worse. Some of the worst people affected are those staying in the quarantine centres and those who are managing those centres. In Odisha, majority of those staying in the quarantine centres are the migrant workers who have come back to their state from extreme circumstances in those states where they were working and thus are susceptible to depression and conflict prone behaviour.

Figure: Mental Health Issues during COVID-19

Source: https://fi.co/insight/coronavirus-mental-wellness-tips-from-the-world-health-organization
Migrant workers

India is a country with more than 13 crore migrant workers. Migrant workers from peri-urban and rural parts of the country who migrate to large cities constitute a major segment of urban population across the country. During a pandemic of infectious disease or social distancing measures as being undertaken for COVID-19, they tend to return back to their homes due to lack of daily wage jobs. In such situations, the resultant congregations of migrant workers travelling in bus stations/State borders may make them susceptible to COVID-19 infection. Further such exposure may lead to them getting infected and also the spread of the disease may extend up to the farthest rural areas in India.

Migrant workers faced with the situation of spending a few days in temporary shelters, which may be quarantine centres, while trying to reach to their native places, are filled with anxieties and fears stemming from various concerns, and are in need of psycho-social support. As part of such support. Sometimes, they also face harassment and negative reactions of the local community. All this calls for strong social protection.

This not only affects their physical health but also their mental health is gravely scarred in the process. Protecting the mental health of these migrant workers of our country is therefore as important as protecting them from the physical health consequences of COVID-19.

Due to this, the Govt. of Odisha has made registration and quarantine of the migrant workers compulsory. Migrant workers who have reached their destination will be identified by the district administration and IDSP will follow them up at their residence.

Figure: The various issues faced by migrant workers in India during COVID-19 Pandemic

Source: https://topicsmentalhealth.wordpress.com/
Purpose of the Manual

Keeping in mind the specific needs of the migrants under quarantine in different quarantine centres and the personnel who are involved in their welfare, specific interventions have been formulated to provide mental health support.

The intervention packages have been targeted for two broad categories of beneficiaries:

1. To raise awareness, train and motivate the responsible team of Sarpanch, ASHA, Anganwadi workers, teachers and other staff engaged in the care of the quarantine centres.

2. To improve the mental health status of the persons during quarantine.

The Physiological first aid, Mental Health Screening and Telepsychiatry is specifically meant for Sarpanch, ASHA, Anganwadi workers, teachers and other staff engaged in the care of the quarantine centres. They can practice it with 2-3 sessions of online training.
Problems Faced during Quarantine
Key Messages

✓ Corona Might Not Kill You, Stigma will!
✓ Our fight is against the corona virus not the patients.
✓ Social Distancing, not Social boycotting
✓ Quarantine is to help, not a jail!
✓ Quarantine person should be treated with dignity, respect and compassion as they are not criminals!
## Intervention Package: “MASS SUPPORT” approach for mental health support during quarantine

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Management of Stress

Everyone experiences stress at times.
A little bit of stress is not a problem.

But very high stress often affects the body.
Many people get unpleasant feelings.

How to know that you are stressed?
Other people find their body gets sick – skin rashes, infections, illnesses or bowel problems.

When they are stressed, many people ...

...cannot focus

...get angry easily

...cannot sit still

...have difficulty sleeping

...feel sad or guilty

...worry

...cry

...feel very tired
Common causes of Stress during Quarantine

- **DISPLACED FROM HOME**
- **UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE**
- **VIOLENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY**
- **PROBLEMS PROVIDING FOR YOUR FAMILY**
- **FEAR OF GETTING THE COVID-19 INFECTION**
So what can we do?

First you learn how to focus, engage and pay attention better.

So notice there are difficult thoughts and feelings appearing…
...and there is also a world around you that you can see and hear and touch and taste and smell.

You sip it SLOWLY. Let it sit on your tongue, feel it on your teeth and savour the taste.
Explore the available solutions and the activities proposed in this manual. Your hardship can make you extremely stressful, which is natural. During stress it is natural to experience anger.
Anger Management

During this lockdown period, you have reached the quarantine set up facing extreme hardship. Inability to fulfil the basic needs of your family, uncertainty about the future and the massive shift in your abode is never pleasant. It is natural to feel helpless, frustrated and irritable. Anger is a feeling arising out of many thought processes. At times it is helpful but on most occasions it leads to interpersonal damage, mistrust, and a missed opportunity to address the actual issue at hand. You can follow the principles described in the image for management of anger.
Scheduling of Daily Activities

Activity scheduling (AS) is an effective behavioural treatment that addresses social isolation in people staying in a closed environment. It is an approach that actively involves individuals by increasing the number of daily activities in which they participate.

1. **Yoga**: Yoga has been found to improve the quality of life, reduce stress, anxiety, insomnia, depression and back pain. According to the alternative medicine, it also helps to improve fitness, strength, and flexibility. Every day, 20-30 minutes of yoga can give all the aforementioned benefits.

2. **Physical Activity**: Exercise not only helps you to live longer, it’s also helps you to live better. In addition to making your heart muscles stronger and fending off a host of diseases. It can also improve your mental and emotional functioning and even bolster your relationship and your productivity. Some kind of workout can be done in order to do physical activity or even 30 minutes brisk walking can give bunches of benefits.

3. **Group/recreational activities with Social Distancing**: Social distancing does not need to be boring; we can come up with different ideas so that some fun activities
can be done. Some kind activities like handicraft, singing completions, bhajankirtan, gardening, poetry & story telling will utilize their time in the evening. Others include playing mobile games and tournaments, watching TV, listening to radio, reading various newspapers.

4. **Self-care:** Self-care means paying attention to and supporting one’s Self care encourages self-improvement. It promotes rest and relaxation, which benefits our overall health and wellness and it’s also promoting healthy relationship. Self-care means knowing who you are and your limits, getting the sleep you need and knowing how to rest, making sure that you are well fed, finding a way to decompress throughout your day, giving a thought to changing a difficult work situation.

5. **Creativity and Hobbies:** Explore the list of creative hobby ideas which interest you. Choose the hobby which fits you the best considering the feasibility. The various possible types of hobbies are paper crafts, printing, stationary, needlecraft, weaving, sculpting, industrial crafts, music, computer/digital and many more. You can also decide to learn one or more skill during this period.

6. **Staying Connected with Friends and Family:** A simple audio / video call with family daily at a fixed time will help it out. It also gives an assurance and motivation by family members to stay quarantine.
An example of activity scheduling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>6:30 am – 7:30 am</td>
<td>Self care /daily routine activities / meditation/ yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 am - 9:30 am</td>
<td>Breakfast, Reading books / Newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 am – 11:30 am</td>
<td>Physical activity/ gardening/ mobile gaming/ handcrafting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 am – 1:30 pm</td>
<td>Vocational and future income prospects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 pm – 3:30 pm</td>
<td>Lunch + Nap (Avoid Sleeping – Use this time to link and connect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 pm – 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Recreational activities and skill development act, group session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 pm – 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 pm – 8:30 pm</td>
<td>Religious Activities /Mass media- news/ Family time/ Vocational and future income prospects/ Group activities with social distancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 pm onwards</td>
<td>Dinner and going to sleep</td>
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Support of Peers and Good Communication

In our current crisis with the corona virus, how we can support the people we serve and the people we love?

• Use the telephone, video calling facilities and social media
• Provide them with accurate information to overcome rumors
• Talk as much possible, share each other’s feelings. If you are upset, find a friend or a neighbour in the quarantine center to talk with. If you see someone upset, you be their support. Ask them what is bothering them and encourage them to talk.
• Be hopeful and cheerful if appropriate.
• Overall, “Be Positive” and spread positivity.

Good Communication

At times of distress people who have been through a crisis event maybe very upset, anxious or confused. Good communication is vital at these times.

• Stay calm and show understanding of the situation and their experience.
• Be open to listen to someone’s story but do not force them to tell you.
• Keep your language simple
• Communicate well with words and body language appropriate to their culture, age, gender, and religion and custom.
• Always be considerate and Respectful.
Social Stigma Reduction

Infectious diseases or communicable diseases carry the burden of social stigma with them. According to WHO, “Social stigma in the context of health is the negative association between a person or group of people who share certain characteristics and a specific disease. In an outbreak, this may mean people are labelled, discriminated against, treated separately, and/or experience loss of status because of a perceived link with a disease.” Public health emergencies during outbreak of communicable diseases may cause fear and anxiety leading to prejudices against people and communities, social isolation and stigma. A crisis situation due to the coronavirus pandemic is the cause that leads to such discriminatory behaviour. Such behaviour may culminate into increased hostility, chaos and unnecessary social disruptions.

Stigma can:

- Drive people to hide the illness to avoid discrimination
- Prevent people from seeking health care immediately
- Discourage them from adopting healthy behaviours

Hence, please do NOT discriminate those people who are positive or are suspected to have coronavirus infection. If you follow all the measures, the chances of you getting infected is very low. The person who is suspected or positive is already in a difficult situation. He/she needs your help and support, not your stigma and discrimination.
Corona might not kill you
Stigma will!
**Utilizing Psychological First Aid**

![Image](https://www.hsclearning.com/course/view.php?id=1042)

**The Seven Components of Psychological First Aid**

- **EDUCATE**
  About normal responses

- **CONNECT**
  With Social Support

- **PROTECT**
  From risk of Infection and Other Threats

- **COMFORT**
  And Console

- **PROVIDE**
  Information on Coping

- **CARE**
  For Immediate Needs

- **SUPPORT**
  For Practical Tasks

**Source:** https://www.hsclearning.com/course/view.php?id=1042

**Who delivers it?**

As mental health professional are unavailable at the site of quarantine, teacher / Anganwadi worker /ASHA can deliver it with adequate social distancing or doing it via videoconferencing through smart phones.
Problem Solving Therapy

Problems are Universal. Every person has his unique ways to deal with a Problem

What is problem solving skill?

Problem solving skills refers to our ability to solve problems in an effective and timely manner without any impediments. It involves being able to identify and define the problem, generating alternative solutions, evaluating and selecting the best alternative and implementing the selected one.

What are the components?

Clarify and define a problem, set a realistic goal, generate multiple solutions, evaluate and compare the situations, select a feasible solution, implement the solution, and evaluate the outcome.

Source: https://www.piedmont.k12.ca.us/learn/blog/2016/01/31/introducing-the-elementary-social-emotional-curriculum-second-step/

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333218762_Adaptation_of_problem-solving_therapy_for_primary_care_to_prevent_late-life_depression_in_Goa_India_the_DIL_intervention
Problem Solving STEPS

1. Speak out the Problem

2. Think about the Solution

3. Explore Consequences

4. Pick the Best Solution

5. See if it Worked
Suicide is a desperate attempt to escape suffering that has become unbearable. Take any suicidal talk or behaviour seriously, it is not just a warning sign that the person is thinking about suicide- It is a cry for help.

Suicidal thoughts
Past suicidal attempt/family h/o of suicide
Arranging the things for suicide
Warning sign for suicides

Don’t leave him alone, provide support and connect to available mental health facility

Immediate referral to psychiatrist
COVID19 pandemic brought out a pandemic of mental health problems as well and it is affecting people across the globe and across class. Usually, psychological problem can be anxiety, sleeplessness, depression etc. However if left untreated, some of them may develop severe mental disorder, hence it is wise to screen, identify those and provide appropriate mental health support through expert opinion and Telepsychiatry. The appropriate instruments are provided in annexure 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Symptoms vary depending on the type of disorder, but common signs may include:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Extreme sadness
- Major changes in personality, eating habits, and/or sleeping patterns
- Dramatic mood swings
- Anger, frustration, or irritability
- Fatigue and lack of energy
- Confused thinking and trouble concentrating
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness

There is not need to screen everybody but if the above symptoms are there, you can use it to screen and if positive, they should be referred to higher centre for confirmation and appropriate treatment. If they do come positive on screening, please maintain confidentiality and respect privacy of the person. Support them and protect them from self-harm and harm from others.
We are facing a unique time in history, when population of the world is enforcing isolation, quarantine, and social distancing. Man is a social creature; we are built to have social contact. Loneliness reached record level in developed as well as developing countries prior to the current crisis and has only recently begun to be addressed. Effective support from friends, families, and community is vital. What we do now will change the future for millions of people. Supporting friends & families, reaching out, showing empathy can be a solution during this crisis. Providing hope and being there is what is necessary. Activities allowing involvement of the families, even if virtually, needs to be brought into practice while in quarantine.
It is a consultation with a mental health professional via means of telecommunication (like phone call, text message, video call etc.)

**When to avail tele psychiatry services?**

a. A person is a known case of mental illness  
 b. A person is addicted to drugs (smoking, tobacco chewing, alcohol, cannabis, opioids, inhalants, others)  
 c. Unable to avail a face to face consultation with a mental health professional.  
 d. Mental health screen positive (PHQ $\geq 5$ or GAD $\geq 10$) If screening is feasible

**Requirements for availing tele psychiatry services**

1. A government issued ID proof with date of birth and address details.  
2. A mobile phone with network  
   OR  
   A designated tele medicine set up includes (computer/ laptop with internet connectivity)
Stay Safe, Stay Healthy; Physically and Mentally

Further Reading
