



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
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## **Taking Care of Mental Wellness During Challenging Times**

The Coronavirus pandemic, economic factors all impact our mental wellness.

### **(Dixon, IL)**

The Coronavirus pandemic has presented a myriad of challenges in our lives and our experiences have all been different with at least one notable exception - We all have seen negative impacts to our mental wellness. At one time or another we all may have seen an increase in feelings of stress, anxiety, fear, sadness, and isolation. For some this has led to not only a deterioration of our mental wellness but also an acceleration in the use of alcohol and other drugs.

According to the Mayo Clinic, "Surveys show a major increase in the number of U.S. adults who report symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression during the pandemic, compared with surveys before the pandemic. Some people have increased their use of alcohol or drugs, thinking that can help them cope with their fears about the pandemic. In reality, using these substances can worsen anxiety and depression."

According to Psychology today, "People with pre-existing mental illnesses have seen their psychological symptoms worsen during isolation, with some turning to substance use as a way to cope. Those already abusing substances have become increasingly dependent on them. Some individuals are struggling with both mental illness and substance addiction, which makes isolation even more difficult." This is a common occurrence for people to have both a mental illness and a substance use disorder.

"During the pandemic if you have experienced trouble concentrating on typical tasks, noticed changes in your appetite, had body aches and pains, had difficulty sleeping, experienced a struggle to face routine chores, or seen an increase in the amount and frequency of your consumption of alcohol or other substance use, you may need to seek treatment," says Patrick Phelan, Sinnissippi Centers President/CEO. "When these signs and symptoms last for several days in a row, make you miserable, and cause problems in your daily life so that you find it hard to carry out normal responsibilities, it's time to ask for help".

What can you do? "If you or someone you know is experiencing significant symptoms of a mental illness or substance use disorder, it important to seek appropriate treatment with a behavioral healthcare provider, like Sinnissippi Centers," adds Phelan. "We have been providing our full range of behavioral healthcare services during the pandemic for all ages including treatment to support mental health, substance use concerns, and any other behavioral health concern."

"One thing that allowed us to continue serving individuals without interruption was the use of telehealth platforms like phone and video conferencing," adds Phelan, "Sinnissippi Centers, like all other healthcare providers, never 'shut down'. We continue to rely primarily on tele-health to provide services with just a handful of in-person appointments. In fact, we have heard from



several Sinnissippi clinicians that a number of their clients have been more active in their services because they don't have the barriers that traditional, office-based services can present. We have also seen a number of clients improve in the management of symptoms during this time despite all of the challenges they have faced," adds Phelan.

"While Sinnissippi Centers is always here if you need behavioral healthcare, if you aren't in need of services from a mental health or substance use treatment professional, we still want to emphasize that it's vitally important for everyone to utilize healthy coping strategies to enable us to deal with such a major event like this global pandemic," says Phelan. "The best way to cope is to take control of returning as much 'normalcy' to your life as possible by keeping your regular routine, avoiding distractions, keeping busy, focusing on the positive, and leaning more heavily on your spiritual life or belief system for support. Additionally, making sure you keep doing activities you enjoy and connecting with other as much as you can are key."

"Other effective strategies are to limit the time you are watching, reading, or listening to news stories including on social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can heighten your anxiety and stress and impact your mental wellness. Even limiting your computer or mobile device screen time can help you to relax especially near bedtime."

Another way is to take care of your physical health which increases your mental wellness, so doing things like stretching, exercising, meditating, eating healthy, getting adequate sleep, and avoiding excessive alcohol or drug use are key ways to keep your mind and body fit during this time.

Local resources include the B-CALM line available for a positive spin on how to deal with the stress you are experiencing. You will chat with someone who is trained in coping and self-care. Call 888-33B-CALM or (888) 332-2256, sponsored as a free service in partnership with the CGH Health Foundation and Sinnissippi Centers. It is an important resource for those who might require just a little help that can be handled in a phone call or two.

Sinnissippi Centers is a behavioral healthcare agency serving Carroll, Lee, Ogle and Whiteside Counties and provides substance abuse screening and treatment services.

For more information about programs and services, call Sinnissippi toll-free at 1-800-242-7642. Sinnissippi has office locations in Dixon, Mt. Carroll, Oregon, Rochelle and Sterling.

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### **Helpful links**

Mental Health in America confidential, free, online screenings [Take a mental health test | MHA Screening - Mental Health America \(mhanational.org\)](#)

CDC: [Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19 | CDC](#)

Psychology Today: [Covid-19 Pandemic Measures and Substance Abuse | Psychology Today](#)

Mayo Clinic: [COVID-19 and your mental health - Mayo Clinic](#)