



COVID-19: Mental Health and The Way Forward

Tara Armour, MSc.

Mental Health in the Caribbean

- Stigma
- Lack of awareness
- Invisible illness
- Lack of resources
- The age old debate:
Psychology vs.
Psychiatry



Covid-19 and Mental Health

- Stress
- Uncertainty
- Financial Strain
- Isolation
- Suicidal Ideation
- Lack of exercise
- [Nutrition](#)
- Lack of boundaries
- Pre-existing conditions



Youth and Mental Health

- Many mental disorders develop prior to age 14 but often go undetected and untreated until later in life.
- Lasting impact on development and adult functioning.
- Symptoms often difficult to identify, e.g. risk taking behaviour.
- Impact of Depression, Anxiety and Social Withdrawal on academic functioning + continued development.
- 60% of global suicide attempts occur prior to 25 years of age.
- Lasting impact of substance use in adolescence.
- Home environment and community violence important considerations for youth with mental health concerns.
- Transition to online schooling – stress + isolation.



Implications + Looking Forward

Onset of Pandemic related mental illness

Increased concerns such as Health Anxiety, Major Depression, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder etc.

Risks associated with prolonged isolation + stress.

Health Care Access

Concerns regarding access to and safety of health care, particularly for PLWNCDs.

Health care access inclusive of assessment and treatment of mental health concerns.

Build Back Better

Young people are the future of our societies, so prioritising their mental health now is an investment in our collective futures.

The only way to “build back better” is to include youth voices in policy discussions regarding *their* future.

The Legacy: Policy Recommendations



Health and Wellness
Incorporate psychoeducation and programs aimed at raising awareness and encouraging participation in physical activities.

Accessibility and Affordability
Increase availability of access to and affordability of Psychological and Wellness services. Mental health as a *priority* rather than a luxury.

New Norm
Campaigns aimed at decreasing stigma surrounding mental illness and increased empathy for interacting with persons with mentally illness.

Budgeting
Health Ministries to incorporate Mental Health services into projective budgets in order to ensure services *as needed* rather than after the fact and follow [best practice guidelines](#).

The Legacy: Policy Recommendations



Multidisciplinary Intervention

Mental illnesses cause functional impairment in occupational, social and academic functioning. Therefore prevention must be prioritised across these domains should be considered best practice.

Educational Environment

School is a major source of social support for young people. Prioritising safe space and creating structured, collaborative mental health initiatives can simultaneously raise awareness and support.

Prevention is the best treatment!

The Way Forward: Personal Recommendations

Stay Active!

Find any excuse to move around and get some exercise, for example online Zumba and Yoga or walking around the neighborhood, and eat healthily.

Check in with yourself

Make time for self-reflection and identify how you are feeling and what you can do to address negative thoughts. Social media, Podcasts and Wellness apps can be great resources.



Find Support

Talk to friends and family members about how you are feeling. Find comfort in community.

"We are not all in the same boat. We are all in the same storm."

Educate yourself

The best way to reduce anxiety is to be informed. Avoid misinformation! Dedicate time to news updates and fact checking as well as time for self-soothing.



THANK YOU!

Additional Resources

General Mental Health Information

[World Health Organisation: Adolescent Mental Health](#)

[MoodFood: Eating for Mental Health](#)

[World Health Organisation: Health At Home #Mental Health](#)

Policy Recommendations + Best Practices

[Child and Adolescent Mental Health in Jamaica](#)

[World Health Organisation Mental Health Policy Planning Best Practices](#)

[World Health Organisation 2013- 2020 Action Plan](#)

Mental Health Maintenance Apps

[Headspace: Guided Meditation](#)

[Calm: Sleep + Meditation](#)

[Happify: Scientifically Based Mood Tracking + Uplifting Exercises](#)

[Moodpath: Mood Tracking + Journaling](#)

Any fitness app which will increase regular physical activity