

Family & Children's

SERVICE OF ITHACA

Dear Friends,

We take the physical health of our community as seriously as we take mental health, so we want you to know about the steps Family & Children's Service of Ithaca is taking to help protect our clients, staff, and community from the Coronavirus:

F&CS is responding proactively to the COVID-19 crisis by pre-screening clients before they come to our offices, in accordance with New York State Department of Health and CDC guidelines. If you're sick, call us at **(607)-273-7494** to reschedule your appointment. During this time, we are relaxing our cancellation policy and waiving late cancellation fees for those who are sick. Bathrooms and public spaces are being cleaned more frequently. The health and safety of both our clients and staff is always our top concern, so we take seriously the potential spread of Covid-19 and are committed to doing our part to prevent it.

Between fears over the Coronavirus, fluctuating economic markets, and financial uncertainty, it's understandable to feel anxiety about the future. When things feel uncertain or when we don't generally feel safe, it's normal to feel stressed. This stress might also connect to our uncertainty about other aspects of our lives, or remind us of past times when we didn't feel safe.

In times like these, our mental health can suffer. We don't always recognize when it's happening, but you might feel more on edge than usual, angry,

helpless or sad, or more frustrated at others. For those of us who already struggle with our mental wellness, we might feel more depressed or less motivated to carry out our daily activities. **It's important to remember that we are not helpless. We can always choose our response.**

During these stressful times, we hope you'll stay attuned to your own wellness. Here are some things you can do to take care of your mental health in the face of uncertainty:

- **Identify and separate what is in your control from what is not.** There are things we can do, and it's helpful to focus on those. Wash your hands, remind others to wash theirs. Avoid shaking hands. Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth. Cough into a disposable tissue and throw it away.
- **Do what helps *you* feel a sense of safety.** This will be different for everyone, and it's important not to compare yourself to others. It's ok if you've decided what makes you feel safe is to limit your attendance of large social events, but make sure you separate when you are isolating based on potential for sickness versus isolating because it's part of depression.
- **Get outside in nature—even if you are avoiding crowds!** Take a walk and get some fresh air. Exercise helps both your physical and mental health, and we all know how precious sunshine can be during springtime in Ithaca!
- **Challenge yourself to stay in the present.** If you find yourself worrying about something that hasn't happened yet, gently bring yourself back to the present moment. Focus on the sights, sounds, and other sensory experiences in your immediate moment and name each of them. Engaging in mindfulness activities is one way to help stay grounded when things feel beyond your control.
- **If you have kids, take time to talk to them.** Answer questions and [share facts](#) about COVID-19 in a way that your child can understand. Reassure your child that they are safe. Let them know it's 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.
- **Stay connected and reach out if you need more support.** Talk to trusted friends about what you are feeling. If you are feeling particularly anxious or if you are struggling with mental health, it's ok to reach out to a mental health professional for support, whether at F&CS or through a crisis hotline. You don't have to be alone with your worry and it can be comforting to share what you are experiencing with those trained to help.

It's important to remember that we are all in this together, and help is always available. If you're feeling alone or struggling, you can reach out to Family &

Children's Service at **607-273-7494**. You can also find help 24/7 at the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at **1-800-273-TALK**, or [The Crisis Text Line](#) by texting **HOME** to **741741**.

Sincerely,



Karen Schachere,
President & CEO



Our mailing address is:

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