During the time of **COVID19**, it is essential that we heed the instructions of our governmental and healthcare leaders, respecting the mandate of self-isolation. We recognize, however, during this time of self-isolation; anxiety, fear and stress may likely develop or worsen, leaving us to face these fears without the tools and coping skills necessary to maintain a healthy mental well-being.

I want to stress the importance of communication, and interaction – even though we must interact from a distance. Family, friends and even neighbours play an important role in keeping us in a calm, positive and healthy mental state. We can utilize technology to share messages of encouragement, friendship and support, playing games with one another, reading together, watching movies or even reading our holy scriptures with one another. It is important that we realize that we are not alone…we are all in this together.

Yes, we must distance ourselves from one another physically, but we must remain connected mentally and socially. Supporting one another, demonstrating acts of kindness and generosity, will help us emerge from these challenging times to become more stronger, more united, and better prepared to deal with the challenges of the future.

Now what we as individuals can do is that we can take care of ourselves:
Identifying mental health concerns:

The WCMHCO/PMF SA notes that people should look out for signs of distressed mental health in themselves and others. Symptoms may include:

- ★ Fear and worry about your own health
- ★ Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- ★ Difficulty sleeping or Concentrating
- ★ Worsening of chronic health problems
- ★ Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
- ★ For those with severe depression, talking about deaths can trigger more negative thoughts of suicide.
- ★ For those with anxiety, seeing people and panic swilling around their anxiety could get worse.
- ★ Those with OCD, seeing actions on hygiene with other people every now and then may lead to or trigger the reactions
- ★ For those with PTSD, getting sick might lose control of their own bodies

Quarantine and social distancing have now become commonplace globally as governments make concerted efforts to fight the spiraling coronavirus outbreak.

The measures, which have seen citizens in most of the countries either encouraged or enforced to stay in their homes, are deemed by the Government and medical experts as necessary in reducing the spread of the virus. But, the implications for people's mental wellbeing cannot be overlooked.

A recent study from medical journal Report states that the psychological impact of quarantine can be great, resulting in a range of mental health concerns from anxiety and anger to sleep disturbances, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Indeed, separate studies of quarantined patients of SARS, a previous coronavirus outbreak in 2003, found between 10% and 29% suffered PTSD.

The WCMHCO report found mental health concerns could be inflamed by stressors associated with quarantine, such as infection fears, frustration, boredom, inadequate supplies, lack of information, financial loss and stigma associated with contracting the disease. That can be an issue not only for people with pre-existing mental health concerns, but also those in seemingly good psychological health.

What individuals can do In Several Weeks of Quarantine.

However, as more and more people face the prospects of several weeks of quarantine or social distancing, individuals will also have to establish their own ways of preserving their mental health at home. **World Changers Mental Health Care Organisation (WCMHCO)/ Peaceful Mind Foundation SA** Make It compiled the advice of psychology experts, as well as several health bodies, to find out their top tips:

Create a routine — Change out of your pajamas, shower and make a to-do of all the things you want to achieve each day to create a sense of normality and productivity.

Break up your day — Find tasks to break up your day and, where possible, change your environment for different activities.

Take care of your body — Eat healthily, get plenty of sleep and exercise daily. That could include conducting indoor workout classes, stretching and practicing meditation.

Help others — If you're not under strict isolation rules yourself, and you're in a position to do so, find ways to support those in need by offering to run errands and collect supplies for them.

Stay connected — Make the most of technology and stay in touch with colleagues, friends and family via phone calls, texts, social media and video conferencing.

Limit media intake — Stay informed about the situation via reliable sources, but limit your news and social media intake to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Prepare medical supplies — **The World Changers Mental Health Care Organisation (WCMHCO)/ Peaceful Mind Foundation SA** advises, where necessary, asking your doctor for extended prescription supplies to tide you over for quarantine periods.

Fight boredom — Make the most of catching up TV series, reading and exploring projects you have been putting off to beat boredom and stay mentally active.

Avoid burnout — Set strict limits to your work to avoid becoming overwhelmed and make time to unwind.

Focus on the positives — Amplify good news stories and honor caregivers working tirelessly to resolve the situation.

Take one day at a time — Try not to project too far into the future. Remember that these are temporary measures and you are not alone.

"Stay in contact with people — virtually — engage in activities that give you pleasure and a sense of meaning, and do what you can to help others, which is a remarkable antidote to depression."
Let's control and help each other

So much is happening around and too much information is oppressing everyone's mental health to an extent that people have departed from Rational to Irrational Thoughts :

1. We are seeing and listening, viewing everything everyday around us (schools getting closed, gatherings cancelled, restaurants and theatres shut etc) , that background music in news keeps haunting us.

2. We as humans have a tendency to think negative and feel it as in case of virus, overlooking the fact to the solution to the problem. Hardly we see people saying the DO's rather we see all discussing the negative impact, shutdowns, news etc (yes that's important but not to the extent it's effecting us)

3. The key here is to be logical and avoid stressing too much due to information overload.

4. The psychology of uncertainty causes major anxiety and fear in people being illogical and hence all have to leave their comfort zones.

5. Do basic Do's and don't panic it worsens the case.

We will overcome, as the PMF we are around to assist in dealing with these extraordinary circumstances.

Hashveer Singh
Peacfulmind Foundation

//Ends