

Psychologist Talks to [name removed] About Mental Strain of COVID-19

Dr. Timothy Legg talked about how the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on many people's mental health. Photo via Dr. Timothy Legg

Dr. Timothy Legg, a licensed psychologist and a psychiatric mental health nurse, spoke at a [name removed] town hall about how the pandemic affects mental health.

Legg says his patients are worried about what might happen if they lose their jobs and those with partners are experiencing relationship dissatisfaction due to being stuck together at home.

If shelter-in-place orders are issued a second time, the mental health impact could be significant, Legg says.

All data and statistics are based on publicly available data at the time of publication. Some information may be out of date. Visit our coronavirus hub and follow our live updates page for the most recent information on the COVID-19 pandemic.

From one day to the next, there's no predicting what COVID-19 might bring.

A fear shared by individuals across the country and around the world right now is what happens if COVID-19 affects us both physically and financially? Experts say many are experiencing mental health challenges due to the many uncertainties surrounding the pandemic.

"The patients that I work with have had a very wide range of experiences, including anxiety related to illness. What happens if somebody I know or love becomes sick? What happens if I become sick? Who's going to care for my child if I die? What happens if my child gets sick?" Timothy Legg, PhD, a licensed psychologist, psychiatric mental health nurse, and [name removed] advisor said.

Legg spoke at a [name removed] town hall today on the COVID-19 pandemic. The town hall also featured Dr. Anthony Fauci Trusted Source, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Handling the mental strain of a pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic isn't just affecting people's physical health, but their mental and financial well-being as well. The massive recession sparked by the pandemic has left at least 11 percent of the American workforce without jobs.

Legg says his patients are worried about what might happen if they lose their jobs and those with partners are experiencing relationship dissatisfaction due to being stuck together at home.

Many are also worried about childcare, not just because it's difficult to keep a child occupied all day, but because they can't go back to work if they don't have a place to send their child.

A recent [name removed] survey found that 54 percent of American parents said childcare will be a financial burden if schools don't reopen, and 35 percent of American parents worry they won't have childcare at all.

Legg says for parents facing this situation, planning is key.

"What I've been advocating for... has to do with planning and being realistic in the plans. Talk to your employer. Is telecommuting a possibility?" he said.

Legg said that people with partners can also try to stagger their work hours so they can also care for children.

If telecommuting isn't a possibility, "what about flexing your hours so that your hours might be offset or somewhat different from your significant other's, and if that doesn't work, try talking to human resources directly," he said.

Another shutdown could significantly affect people's mental health
Legg says if shelter-in-place orders are issued a second time, the mental health impact could be significant.

"If you thrust individuals back into that situation, I'm predicting that you may see some more rapid deterioration among people who were already affected by it the first time, and individuals who demonstrated resilience to it could either continue to demonstrate resilience or you may see some deterioration there," he said.

Legg argues it's essential that individuals do what they can to ensure they are looking after themselves.

"There is very much an ethic instilled in us that we have to excel all the time, that we have to be the ones always taking care of things, but we need to take care of ourselves," he said. "So if you're struggling, reach out to your family and friends. If you see someone else is struggling, please reach out to them. We're in this together and we'll get out of it together."