



SADAG KZN NEWSLETTER MARCH 2020

Special Edition

"We need to think three steps and three weeks ahead. Practise physical distancing but stay in touch, connect, and see what we all have in common"

Brian Stelter, CNN



HOPE AND HUMANITY DURING COVID-19

Suntosh R. Pillay

Last week Thursday I spoke at the opening of an evocative photo exhibition at the Durban Art Gallery. It was created and curated by Chantelle Booysen, our project manager and youth ambassador at SADAG KZN, and titled the Empathy and Hope Project.

The photos were windows into subaltern worlds, usually unseen or ignored: mental illness, loss and loneliness, refugees, homeless people, drug addicts. Heavy stuff. As I stood in front of these photos, imagining lived experiences so different from my own, these portals to empathy invited me to think about hope. Somewhere, somehow, people muster up the hope to continue living – how and where do they find it? It's not easy seeing silver linings in clouds of despair. But it's there. It has to be. Our survival – and our humanity – is proof of it.

History shows us that each generation faces some catastrophic event that makes the possibility of tomorrow seem almost unreachable – whether it's the World Wars 1 and 2, the Holocaust, Apartheid, countless natural disasters, Spanish flu, the Plague, Cholera, HIV, Ebola, and now, Covid-19. Hope must be hard-wired into our genes as an evolutionary trip-switch against hopelessness. Hope requires a courageous optimism and faith that as a species our existence as humans transcends even the darkest of times. We'd be extinct long ago if this wasn't true.

In these uncertain times, let's remember our mental health and wellbeing. Social distancing is not emotional distancing. It's our collective responsibility to foster hope – while washing our hands!



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

IN LIGHT OF THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ON THE COVID-19 VIRUS, SADAG KZN HAS TAKEN SOME MEASURES TO ENSURE YOUR SAFETY

Following the outbreak of the global pandemic, COVID-19, South Africa has taken prompt action and declared a national state of disaster in terms of the Disaster Management Act. This disaster management mechanism will focus on preventing and reducing the spreading of this virus.

This does impact our work at SADAG KZN, our monthly events, volunteer programme and the smooth running of support groups, because "social distancing" is required to minimize the spread of the virus. While not wanting to cause panic through this stressful and uncertain time, we would like to ensure that we are taking relevant precautions to ensure the safety of all our staff, volunteers, support group leaders and their members. We would also like to continue engaging with our supporters and the KZN community around important mental health issues that are arising as a result of the virus and measures taken to control it. Please take note of the following important information:

OUR HELPLINES ARE ACTIVE

We know that SADAG provides a critical service to the country as well, so our head office will be doing whatever they can to ensure the call centre operates as usual during this period. You will still be able to access all our critical telephonic and on-line services:

- Tel: 0800 21 22 23 / 0800 456 789
- Sms: 31393
- Whatsapp: 076 882 2775
- Online chats: www.sadag.org
- Social media: @theSADAG

KZN OFFICE WORKING REMOTELY

We will be working remotely! Our office at UKZN will **remain closed until after the Easter weekend**, and for the duration of closure of the UKZN campus. All staff will continue working remotely and you will still be able to contact the office for queries on kznsadag@anxiety.org.za or **087-278-7047** during office hours. All non-essential meetings, trainings and events will be postponed, or organised to take place electronically or via webinar – we will keep you posted.

REMOTE VOLUNTEERING ASSISTANCE NEEDED

Although the SADAG KZN office will be closed in the short term, we will still require remote volunteering assistance. We will be arranging "zoom meetings" with lots of "e-tasks!" Please ensure you are on the Whatsapp group in order to receive updated information. We will be staying in touch with all those volunteers who have some time on their hands and are willing to stay involved during this period. Our **next first Friday will on 3 April 2020** – Mental Health First Aid with Clinical Psychologist Suntosh Pillay – arrangements are being made to have a webinar – notices and details will be sent out shortly.

SADAG KZN OFFICE CONTACT

Lynn Norton | kznsadag@anxiety.org.za
Chantelle Booysen | kznprojects@sadag.org
+27 78 278 7047

SADAG NATIONAL HELPLINE

0800 456 789
www.sadag.org



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

IN LIGHT OF THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ON THE COVID-19 VIRUS, SADAG KZN HAS TAKEN SOME MEASURES TO ENSURE YOUR SAFETY

SUPPORT GROUPS SAFETY

As we take the safety of our Support Groups very seriously, we have recommended that Support Groups in their normal 'capacity' are postponed until further notice, to prevent possible infection or exposure. This is however left to the discretion of each Support Group Leader and their Group Members. In lieu of traditional face-to-face meetings, we are exploring alternate options for the time being, in the form of Whatsapp Groups, Skype group calls or even Zoom.

Important:

- Please contact your support group leader to check for any changes to your regular group.
- You can contact the helpline or Rivendri 0641394303 to find out whether groups are active.
- Groups running from Nazareth House have been postponed.
- Support Group leaders will be in direct contact with their members about telephonic and WhatsApp support.
- Support Group Leaders Forum with Clinical Psychologist Suntosh Pillay has been cancelled for March.
- Support Group Leaders are invited to send in questions via email (kznsadag@anxiety.org.za) or Whatsapp on the Support Group Whatsapp Group, or to call 087 278 7047 for support.
- Clinical Psychologist Kristy Greener is also available for queries on krisgreener@gmail.com.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The SADAG website will be regularly updated with new content regarding the the COVID-19 virus, and the possible impact it has on mental health. Visit www.sadag.org for information and details on steps to take to protect your mental wellbeing.

ESSENTIAL COVID-19 CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

- Toll-free helpline that deals with COVID-19 questions: 0800 029 999.
- Website with the latest updates on COVID-19 in South Africa: www.sacoronavirus.co.za
- WhatsApp platform run by the Department of Health: 0600 123456



**CLICK HERE
to CONTRIBUTE
to our impactful
programmes**

DONATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

During this trying and uncertain time, our staff at SADAG KZN will work even harder to provide mental health support services and interventions for those who need it most. If you are able to contribute, please do click on the link and help us keep our (remote) doors open to everyone in need. Thank you for everyone who supports us throughout the year!

SADAG KZN OFFICE CONTACT

Lynn Norton | kznsadag@anxiety.org.za
Chantelle Booysen | kznprojects@sadag.org
+27 78 278 7047

SADAG NATIONAL HELPLINE

0800 456 789
www.sadag.org

PROTECTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING SOCIAL DISTANCING AND UNCERTAINTY

Managing “Acute on Chronic Uncertainty”

Giuseppe Raviola, MD MPH

As we enter this new and unprecedented phase of the pandemic, we are inundated with guidelines about how to keep ourselves and our families healthy and virus-free. Yet a key item on the list—social distancing—poses unique challenges to our mental and emotional wellbeing, and requires consideration. The risk may be especially high for our children, who are suddenly cut off from school and friends. How do we as individuals and parents cope without driving ourselves and each other crazy? It's a question that mental health professionals such as myself are being asked multiple times a day and that urgently needs addressing. This introduction and list was written with the help of people with whom I work, trying to gain steady emotional footing in this strange new scenario we together are in.

1. Social distancing does not mean emotional distancing; use technology to connect widely.
2. Create clear routines and schedule activities 7 days a week, but don't go overboard.
3. Exercise daily, if possible.
4. Limit internet by pursuing learning and intellectual engagement through reading.
5. Cultivate positive family time.
6. Spend time alone outside and inside, if possible, but remember, don't isolate.
7. Engage in focused meditation and relaxation.
8. Remember the things that you really enjoy doing, that you can do in this situation, and find a way to do them.
9. Limit exposure to television and internet news.
10. Bathe daily, if possible, to reinforce the feeling of cleanliness.



>> REMEMBER <<

Conversations are not be cancelled
Relationships are not be cancelled
Love is not cancelled
Songs are not cancelled
Reading is not cancelled
Self-care is not cancelled
AND HOPE is not cancelled

Let's embrace the good things we have!

MENTAL HEALTH AND COPING DURING COVID-19

“Coping with these feelings and getting help when you need it will help you, your family, and your community recover from a disaster. Connect with family, friends, and others in your community. Take care of yourself and each other, and know when and how to seek help.”

<https://www.6seconds.org/2020/03/10/eq-resources-covid-19/>

CORONAVIRUS: HOW TO PROTECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

“A lot of anxiety is rooted in worrying about the unknown and waiting for something to happen - coronavirus is that on a macro scale,” agrees Rosie Weatherley, spokesperson for mental health charity Mind. So how can we protect our mental health?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-51873799>

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF QUARANTINE AND HOW TO REDUCE IT: RAPID REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

- Information is key; people who are quarantined need to understand the situation
- Effective and rapid communication is essential
- Supplies (both general and medical) need to be provided
- The quarantine period should be short and the duration should not be changed unless in extreme circumstances
- Most of the adverse effects come from the imposition of a restriction of liberty; voluntary quarantine is associated with less distress and fewer long-term complications
- Public health officials should emphasise the altruistic choice of self-isolating

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30460-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30460-8/fulltext)

SADAG KZN OFFICE CONTACT

Lynn Norton | kznsadag@anxiety.org.za
Chantelle Booysen | kznprojects@sadag.org
+27 78 278 7047

SADAG NATIONAL HELPLINE

0800 456 789
www.sadag.org