

The Genesis Therapy Center

SUMMER 2020

Smashing Diet Culture During the Pandemic Sara Allen, LPC, NCC

During the first few weeks of the covid-19 pandemic, with everyone's normal routine upended, many of us responded by turning to foods that give comfort. It seemed many thought, "I should eat now before I'm down to my last cracker in the cabinet." That quickly turned into more comfort eating followed by a course-correction of food-restricting. So much of our social media fixated on baking banana bread and sourdough starters. Memes were circulating about gaining the pandemic 15+ (pounds). Clients have shared how diet culture has shaped their lives during this time, and in particular, we see our relationships with food also reflects a need to feel some control during uncertainty.

An onslaught of diet culture messages about how to avoid weight gain while under quarantine is adding fuel to the fire. After all, diet culture profits off of our insecurities and fears about our bodies. It tells us we're not good enough; and what a better time to capitalize on those fears and insecurities than when we're all feeling less control.

This time has shored up many feelings for folks on their bodies. For those wanting to do this work, remind yourself that your priority is to take care of yourself as best as you can. Some days it might mean eating summer vegetables and other days it might mean Fritos and 7-layer dip. It is possible to use this time to be nicer to our bodies. Foods do not have a moral value: they are neither good nor bad. Empower yourself to let go of these labels. Neutralizing food can help us let go of shame and it can be about the basic need to eat.

Social Distancing Rifts Joleen Hartland MS, LCPC

As the pandemic presses on and restrictions ease, we are all trying to figure out how comfortable we are with certain social contact. This will likely create conflict with our family and friends that feel differently about what level of contact is comfortable. We all are different, have different tolerance for levels of risk, and have different circumstances with vulnerability to getting sick, and concern about who we might get sick if we are exposed. So how can we navigate these conflicts so we can respect different stances on socializing safely without causing rifts.

To begin with, we need to acknowledge that these disagreements can be difficult and why. The stress we are all feeling around Covid-19 can create situations ripe for tensions. Some of us are needing contact and closeness, others feel more anxiety around situations of increased conflict. It is also difficult to discuss these feelings because we are afraid of hurting others or afraid of the disagreement.

First of all, determine what level of contact you are comfortable with. You have the right to set your own level of risk. Identify your own rules, knowing they may change over time. Next, communicate your stance clearly and nondefensively, letting others know where you stand. This can take practice. Remain confident in where you stand and express it kindly. Be willing to say no if someone pushes back on your boundary.

It is important we all respect each other's boundaries and support each other. Ask about the other's boundaries, check in with them about what they are comfortable with. We need each other to get through this time and honoring each other can be an essential part of maintaining these connections.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/family-friends-disagree-social-distancing-coronavirus/2020/06/06/ec4b034a-a769-11ea-b473-04905b1af82b_story.html



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Coping with Covid

Joleen Hartland MS, LCPC

We are all grappling with different stressors and feelings around the Covid-19 pandemic. For some of us there is the anxiety about ourselves or people we love getting sick. For others the worry about money or job loss can be overwhelming. And for still others there is sadness and loneliness due to the isolation around social distancing. There is so much uncertainty about this virus, how and when we can find treatments and vaccine, and the consequences to the economy. The resulting helplessness and unpredictability can be overwhelming. Still more of us are coping with the loss of family or friends to the virus or coping with being sick ourselves.

This all can lead to anxiety, panic attacks, changes in sleep or eating patterns, difficulty concentrating, worsening of mental health symptoms or chronic health conditions, and increased use of alcohol or other drugs. It is really important to find ways to cope with these stressors in a healthy way.

Take care of your emotional health. Stay connected to family and friends; if you can't safely connect face to face, use zoom or other online venues where possible.

Be gentle with yourself about how you are doing. This is a really difficult time and if you are having trouble coping that is completely understandable. Have reasonable expectations for yourself in how you are coping.

Eat well and exercise. Have a good sleep routine. Avoid alcohol and drugs.

Find ways to be involved in activities you enjoy, take breaks and find ways to relax.

Avoid too much exposure to the news.

Stay informed about where to get treatment if you are sick and get reliable information about how to keep yourself and family safe.

Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row. Free and confidential [resources](#) can also help you or a loved one connect with a skilled, trained counselor in your area.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

Anyone interested in supporting our testing services may make a designated donation to The Genesis Therapy Center and make clear that the amount donated is to go towards providing an assessment service for a child or adolescent. For further information, please contact our Executive Director, Catherine Fairfield, at 708-535-7320, ext. 11.

The Genesis Therapy Center

Administrative Office
6006 W. 159th Street
Oak Forest, IL 60452

Phone: (708) 535-7320
Fax: (708) 535-7571

We're on the Web!

Visit us at: <http://www.genesistherapy.org>
E-Mail: info@genesistherapy.org

Other Locations:

Schaumburg, IL
930 W Higgins Rd

Oak Brook, IL
2625 Butterfield Rd
Suite 138S

Oak Park, IL
1010 Lake St
Suite 603B

La Grange, IL
14 W Burlington Ave
Suite 8

Oak Lawn, IL
5210W 95th Street

Oak Lawn, IL
9411 S 51st Ave

Griffith, IN
427 N Broad St