April 22, 2020

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions, it is important to remember that everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How one responds to the outbreak can depend on one's background, the things that make us different from other people, and the community we live in.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

- Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19
- Children and teens
- People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors, other health care providers, and first responders
- People who have mental health conditions including problems with substance use

This is a time to be supportive of one another and practice methods that help us cope with these abrupt challenges. Here are a few suggestions to cope with stress:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting
- Take care of your body
- Take deep breaths or stretch
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals
- Exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep
- Avoid alcohol and drugs
- Make time to unwind! Try to do activities you enjoy
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling

Remember—learning how to cope with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger. Contact the Dickinson County Extension Office at 785-263-2001 or dk@listserv.ksu.edu for additional information.