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Health and Lifestyle News

Omicron Anxiety Can Be Beaten

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KAWARTHA LAKES-With masses being vaccinated and the Covid-19 casualty declining, I felt that the light at the end of the tunnel was nearby and I began to let my guard down. But just when I began to relax myself trusting in all the precautions I had taken, I felt a rush of high blood pressure and a tension headache when I heard about the Omicron version of Coronavirus. An epidemic that started in 2019, came back as Delta, later in 2020, and we managed to dodge it. Now in 2021, it has come back as Omicron. It seems that the obstinate curse of Covid-19 doesn't want to go away. I know, I am not alone with this anxiety.

Being a professional in the field of mental health and having been trained to recognize and manage my own negative feelings, I found myself surprised with my own reaction to the arrival of Omicron type of Coronavirus. I felt like shouting-out, "How long, O Lord, how Long!". Of all the people, I was supposed to be an expert, a stronger one, and I was supposed to be technically competent in handling my negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger, frustrations, yet I began to cave into my own anxiety and depression due to the never-ending life of this virus.

Having taught others in managing their stresses, anxiety, emotional fatigue and burn-out, now I was facing it myself and not handling it very well. Prolonged stresses have a way of wearing us out and causing emotional fatigue, so I reached-out to a friend. Thanks to a fellow professional and a friend, recognizing the sign and symptoms of anxiety-depression within me offered the necessary mental health support. The intervention was timely, and helpful and I bounced back. It was then I realized that if I as a seasoned professional could fall victim to Covid-19 anxiety, then there must have been many non-professionals too who must be struggling the way I had struggled.

Interestingly, negative emotions have a way of creeping in within our lives, without us even being aware of it. Generally, the negative emotions start with one negativity and then slowly, even without our knowledge, a bunch of them get invited to invade our mind, making

our lives miserable. The result – we get emotionally exhausted. This is what happened to me. My first negative feeling was not being able to see my grandson for nearly two years, who lived in another province. We made several plans to fly to see him but each time we tried, we had to cancel our plans. Being in quarantine for a long time added to our isolation from our other family and friends. Quarantine further triggered my negative emotions.

The more I tried to keep myself informed by watching news, the more I got bombarded with many other kinds of bad news which added fuel to my already unsettled emotional state. Fire and floods in the eastern and the western provinces of Canada and in other parts of the globe. Inflation caused by events happening beyond anyone's control. World-wide refugee crisis. Taliban crisis and the oppression of women. Earthquakes. Political crisis in other parts of world. Stresses and burn out among the health-care professionals. Surgeries being postponed. Hospitals facing their own problems. Vaccine inequity in the developing nations. My own relatives suffering in other parts of the world and not being able to help. One night, my wife expressed, "how can we be comfortable within our homes especially when we see millions of people suffering?" My friend suggested that we may have been suffering from the "survivors' guilt".

For those suffering from anxiety, stresses and burn-out related to the Covid-19/Omicron, here are some suggestions to maintain their emotional health and well being:

Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of anxiety, depression, stresses, emotional fatigue, burn-out etc. Accept its reality. Realize that you are not alone and that sooner or later, this crisis too will be tamed by the scientists, much the same way other past pandemics have been tamed.

Reach-out to family, friends and even professionals for support. Even if it may not be possible to see them face-to-face, it is worth it to reconnect through internet with your family-friends who are your

'support-mechanisms'. Consult your family physician/health professionals.

Take care of yourself through healthy lifestyle – eating, resting, sleeping right, limiting the use of drugs alcohol and screen-time, exercising, and maintaining a healthy balance between work and home life.

Taking charge of your own distorted destructive thoughts which instigate all kinds of negativities. What we are going through is not primarily a political or human rights problem but a public health crisis, which has a domino effect on the family, society, and the economy, hence the need to not only taking care of yourself but your neighbours too.

Maintaining a positive attitude. Positive attitude doesn't mean things will happen just the way you planned but whatever happens, eventually it will lead to positive-outcome.

Maintain a gratitude journal and keep track of all the good things happening in your life. After all, despite the pandemic, we are still alive, not in a hospital-bed or ICU, we have enough to sustain ourselves.

Living mindfully. Eating mindfully. Going for a relaxing walk in nature, mindfully. Distracting our minds through music, nature walk, books etc. Keep yourself meaningfully busy. Remind yourself that scientists are working round-the-clock to find the answer to this problem.

Meditation, at least five minutes a day, preferably at same time and at the same location. Maintain hope and faith in the Higher Power while continuing to be responsible for your own individual health & well being by following the pandemic protocol.

Go beyond living for yourself and volunteer. Benevolence, sharing, volunteering and helping others has a tremendous value in

maintaining our physical and mental health. They single-handedly add meaning and a purpose to our existence, and when there is a purpose, coping and capitalizing on crisis becomes possible.

Naresh James