

خانه نو نوی کور

New Home



خانه نو، سرویس خبری برای اهل افغانستان در امریکا است  
نوی کور، په امریکا که د افغانانو لپاره یو خبری خدمت دی

**A news service for Afghans in America**

NEW HOME is brought to you by Sahan Journal, Afghan Cultural Society, and Center for Victims of Torture. It's reported and written by Hussain Ali Haidari.

# Normal Reactions to Abnormal Stress

Written by Connor Molloy, Psychotherapist, MSW, LICSW

Stress is not only a common part of life, but it can actually be a really beneficial part of life. If you are stressed about starting a fire in the kitchen, you will be careful when you cook and make sure to turn off the stove when you were finished. If you're stressed about your kids' safety, you will be proactive in protecting them and teaching them how to be safe. These are normal kinds of stress and our bodies can handle it without even thinking about the fact we are handling stress. Another way to think about it is that if you want to get stronger arms, you go to the gym and stress your arm muscles with a dumbbell.

However, there are some types of stress that are abnormal and not helpful. These could include experiencing serious injury, being threatened with death, or the violent loss of a loved one. Abnormal means that our human bodies were not made to comfortably manage this kind of stress, and therefore our go-to methods of handling stress get overwhelmed.

Those are like going to the gym and having a 500-pound barbell dropped on you from the ceiling. That sort of stress doesn't help, and it can often cause harm.

Abnormal does not necessarily mean uncommon. For those being forced to evacuate Afghanistan, serious injury, being threatened with death, or the violent loss of a loved one may have been common experiences.

People that go through these experiences usually end up having some common reactions.

People often experience **invasive memories that they cannot get rid of, difficulty feeling good emotions like joy, finding it hard to connect with other people, and getting irritated easily**, among others. These may be new experiences, and these may be uncomfortable to experience, but rest assured that they are very, very normal experiences.

In the United States, those are called "symptoms."

Just like a fever, a cough, and shortness of breath are symptoms that someone has experienced COVID-19, it is the same that unwanted memories, numbness, and feeling isolated are symptoms that someone has experienced unmanageable stress. And if you found out you have COVID-19 you would never ignore it or pretend like you did not have it, you would do something about it. So what can you do with the effects of unmanageable stress?

The first step in recovery is safety and stability. For many of you, getting out of Afghanistan, waiting in different camps, and making it to Minnesota was an enormous first step to achieving safety. Doing that required intelligence, adaptability, courage, and perseverance – all qualities that are going to help you work toward thriving in the United States.

Questions or comments?

Leave your feedback at:

**651-504-8170**

However, safety concerns still exist in Minnesota and, as we all know, the resettlement process is certainly anything but stable. So where should someone start?

A good place to start is with something you have control over – your body and what you do with your day. Moving your body can be an important part of feeling better. This could mean going to the gym, but it could also mean walking around a lake with a friend, or finding a class at a community center. Stretching, volleyball, soccer, and cricket are examples of healthy physical activity that also reduces stress.

**Breathing exercises** can help reduce stress. You can perform these simple breathing exercises as often as needed. It can be done standing up, sitting, or laying down. When you are in need of energy breathe through your nose for 5 seconds, hold the breath for 3 seconds, and release the breath from your mouth for 3 seconds. Repeat at least 5 times. If you are in need of calming yourself breathe in through your nose for 3 seconds, hold the breath for 3 seconds, and release the breath from your mouth for 5 seconds.

**Sleeping** is a time that your body uses to heal your nervous system, and reverse the effects of stress. It can help to set a rigid schedule, going to sleep at the same time each night and waking up at the same time each morning. One trick is to force yourself out of bed at your set time even if it is on a day you are tired!

**Eating:** There is not much more symbolic of living in the United States than driving by a McDonald's every few blocks, and that food is cheap and easy to get. But it may not help your body feel it's best. Several common ingredients in Afghan dishes are beneficial for your health.

- **Onion:** Has anti-stress and anti-anxiety effects, vitamin C, B6, folate, potassium and manganese.
- **Spinach:** Contains lutein, iron, and vitamin A.
- **Tomato:** Contains Lycopene, vitamin C, supports heart and brain health.
- **Banana:** Contains potassium, fiber, and magnesium.
- **Ginger:** Aids in digestion and reduces nausea, lowers blood pressure, eases cold and flu symptoms.



- **Garlic:** Fights bacteria, viruses, fungi, and even parasites. Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol, reduce cancer risk, strengthens the immune system
- **Green Tea:** Contains antioxidants, reduces anxiety, decreases inflammation, and lowers cholesterol.
- **Tumeric:** Tumeric has anti-inflammatory properties and supports joint health, the immune system, and gastric health.

The key is to try to make as many routines as patterned and predictable as you can. The good thing is, many of you had these patterned and predictable routines while living in Afghanistan, it just may take some more intentionality to reinstate them in your new environment in Minnesota.

# Upcoming Events

From ACS and Our Partners

## Eid al Fitr

Sunday April 14th, 4-7 PM

Brian Coyle Center, 420 15th Ave. S, Minneapolis, 55454

Mark your calendars for a family Eid al Fitr celebration hosted by Afghan Cultural Society!

**Guests must register in advance, please call Rahimi at 612.366.8176**