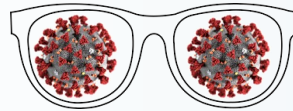




National Council on Substance Abuse

## Looking at Substance Abuse Through The Eyes of Covid 19



### Maintaining Your Mental Health During COVID-19

By Dr. Ronald Chase Psychiatrist



The Covid- 19 pandemic exemplifies the unpredictability of life and the uncertainties about the future .

We are faced with unfamiliar stressors and circumstances and it is important we apply healthy coping strategies. The popular remedy for stress in today’s society is to drink some alcohol, smoke some weed and breeze. It is encouraged in a lot of our music, advertisements on television

and social media.

The important question is, after we have used these substances are our problems solved or any better? The answer is no, but we have spent money we can ill afford to spend at this time. Can we think of rational and realistic solutions to our problems intoxicated? The more we practice using these substances to relax and de-stress the faster we create a habit that we can not control.

We need to think about our relatives who must share the same space with us. When we become intoxicated, we can offer no help to them, and they are forced to put up with our drunken behaviour. We will say our family and friends should accept us for who we are and what we do as what we do. But what if they do accept you for who you are but they see that the things you are doing are destroying you.

Do you want them to smile and reassure you as you walk off the edge of a cliff to your death? Is that how you define family and friendship? Or do you prefer a friend or relative love you enough that they encourage you to be the best you that you can be?

The things or activities that we enjoy and that can de-stress us are varied and highly specific to the individual. Activities such as running, cycling, swimming, playing road tennis, gardening, walking our pets all healthy forms of de-stressing exercise.

Others maybe artistic and they may enjoy painting, drawing, photography, listening to music, song writing, poetry, or dance. Simple family activities such as board games, watching movie at home with the family, playing with the children are inexpensive, fun and builds healthy family relationships. We are Bajans, we are strong and most of us commonly say “God is a Bajan” because He has spared us so much destruction and He continues to watch over us. We must stay calm, levelheaded, do healthy things we enjoy as regularly as we can. We should rationally think about our circumstances and solutions for the way forward for us as individuals.

**The circumstances from the Covid 19 pandemic will not break us but make us stronger.**



The NCSA is urging the public to call 239- 0584 or 230- 0377, if there is a family member or relative who requires help managing substance abuse issues during this time.

Call our office at: (246) 535-6272

*“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”*



## Counselling In These Times

By Natalia Corbin Ifill - NCSA Counsellor

The week after the first confirmed cases of Covid-19 were announced in Barbados, the decision was made to transition to Teletherapy. The week of March 23, 2020 the National Council on Substance Abuse started Teletherapy in the office.

That same week a number of new clients were scheduled, however, I allowed them to come in to just fill out the paper work while maintaining social distancing. During this week after, clients were encouraged to use head or ear phones and to situate themselves, if possible, in a room to create a confidential space on their end.

Most client's welcomed this new way of delivering counselling. Very few rejected this approach of not having sessions face to face. Those who did were still contacted intermittently to briefly check in to find out how they were coping. For those who didn't have access to the Internet, sessions were conducted through the regular telephone (landline) to still provide them with some support. This definitely meant that one could not see the client's facial expressions and body language.

Starting March 30, 2020, after the 24 hour curfew was in effect, the Council continued Teletherapy as we switched to "the work from home" mode. Overall, it was not always smooth sailing as there were some challenges along the way. Some of the challenges were similar to the regular face-to face sessions such as no shows.

Other challenges unique to this new way of operating were connectivity issues and when these occurred sessions were prevented from taking place on that day. Also, the inability to distribute therapeutic worksheets, as I would in a face-to face setting, was another issue that had to be addressed.

Another disadvantage was the inability to have drug tests administered to validate any repeated reports of non-use. The new way of operating generally required one to think differently to find new ways to facilitate therapeutic activities.

During the lockdown and curfew period, there were a few callers inquiring about the Council's services or requesting help. In my opinion, one benefit of the lockdown based on subjective reports, was in some cases a cessation of use or a reduction of use.

Again, bear in mind that this is subjective data and the organization was not in a position to arrange drug testing due to the social distancing restrictions. As the Council tends to serve those with less severe cases of drug use, there were no reports of severe negative effects such as severe withdrawal symptoms from non-use.

Despite the challenges, we at the NCSA are still committed to assisting the public who are desirous of overcoming substance use. We are just a phone call away. Recovery and overcoming substance use is still possible during the COVID-19 era and beyond. Being committed is key. **Call us at 535-6272 the National Council on Substance Abuse can help.**



### Question:

What effects does smoking, whether tobacco cigarettes or marijuana and COVID-19 have on respiratory system?



### Answer:

The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 could be an especially serious threat to those who smoke tobacco or marijuana or who vape. Smoking and COVID-19 damages the respiratory system, and increase risk of pneumonia. If you smoke drugs, such as crack, cigarettes, or methamphetamine, COVID-19 infection will make it difficult to breathe.



## Preparing for the storm:- NCSA and COVID-19 By Betty Hunte - NCSA Manager

The announcement of the first COVID positive case in Barbados on March 17th, crystallized the fears of many including those in the workplace. Internally, we had put systems in place based on international feedback to respond to a “what if” scenario.

As an initial measure, we converted an existing office space into an isolation room. This room is downstairs away from day-to-day staff operations. We ‘retrofitted’ the room with a cot, items of PPE, and our Health and Safety Committee provided emergency guidelines which were affixed in strategic areas around the office.

Our preparations included an intimate conversation with Dr. Adrian Lorde and staff members on January 24th. Dr. Lorde provided us with a very practical approach to the disease, and patiently answered myriad questions from staff.

We continued to work from home, meeting via e-platforms regularly, continuing to tweak our programming for delivery to the public. Even though we have returned to work, we continue to adjust our programming to ensure that our

mandate of drug prevention education can continue.

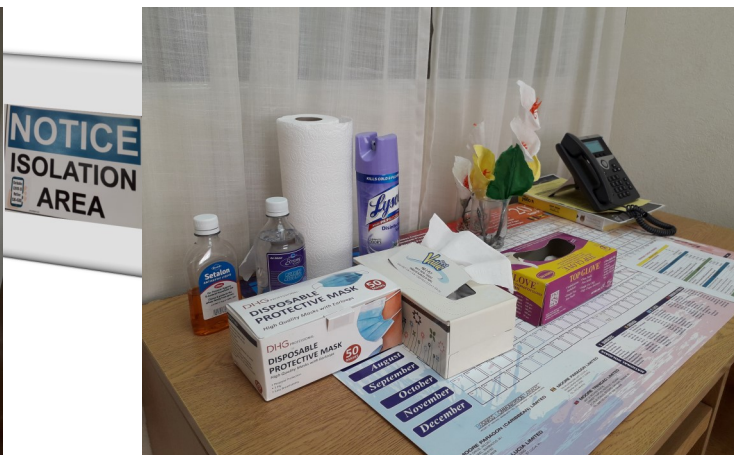
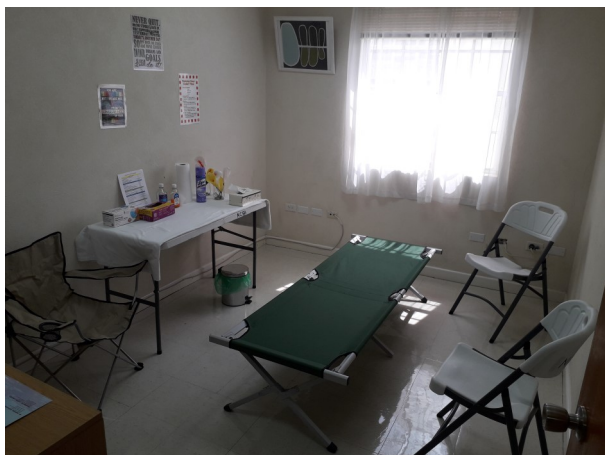
Even though this pandemic has brought home for us the necessity to be innovative, it has also underscored the need for us to be compassionate and unselfish, even as we continue to support our clients who need our services more than ever at this time.

So often at these times we forget that caregivers themselves need to seek support in order to ensure that we do not become overwhelmed while attending to the needs of others.

The NCSA is not immune to the challenges faced by countless others:- our staff is made up of persons who care for elderly parents and children; who are heads of households; who themselves may be compromised by pre-existing conditions; but who understand that we all must make sacrifices in order to effectively stem the spread of this disease.

***We are all in this together; No retreat; no surrender.***

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## COVID-19 and Substance Abuse By Dr. Adrian Lorde OBE, BSc, MBBS, MSc - Family Physician

Much has been said and written about the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, named COVID-19. This virus was first recognised in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province. It has now spread like wildfire all over the world, with millions of cases confirmed and many more not documented, with hundreds of thousands of deaths reported and still rising by the minute.

This unprecedented pandemic has affected any and everyone. It knows no boundaries, and it has caught many governments, doctors, researchers and persons generally unaware. Its mortality rate although thought to be less than 1 percent causes a lot of sickness and has an affliction for the respiratory system.

Initially the primary symptoms were said to be fever, dry cough and shortness of breath but COVID-19 can and does affect all body systems and the signs and symptoms are endless. Interestingly, a significant number of persons can be without any symptoms at all. We are still learning more about this virus.

Most vulnerable are those who are persons over the age of 70, diabetics, hypertensives, cancer patients and those with altered immune systems, and those with respiratory illnesses including asthma. These persons seem to be more likely to have a worse outcome as shown in Barbados where five of the first seven deaths were reportedly diabetics not well controlled.

**Persons with substance abuse have not been included thus far with respect to COVID-19 as vulnerable.** The statistics here in Barbados and internationally have not included substance abusers as a category thus far. This pandemic has caused a lot of stress, anxiety and panic especially with the changes made to our lives and livelihood, employment and economic loss to the society and individuals, the uncertainty and fear of the future.

### Dr Adrian Lorde on : Substances and COVID-19

**Drinking Alcohol :** If one drinks more than 14 units or alcoholic drinks per week, this can act negatively on one's health and make persons more at risk from the effects of COVID-19. Alcohol use, especially heavy use, weakens the body's immune system and thus reduces the ability to cope with COVID-19 if caught.

**Marijuana:** Is smoked or used in vaping. Since COVID-19 attacks the lungs, if they are not in good condition then marijuana use at this time can be dangerous. Many persons will ask about medical marijuana but I am not referring to the use of CBD at this time, I am talking about the THC and numerous other chemicals in the marijuana plant when smoked.

**Cocaine:** If one had been using cocaine in any form, then, a reduced blood flow especially to the lungs is not what one needs if COVID-19 infection occurs. This increases the risk of complications such as lung damage and pulmonary hypertension if COVID-19 infection happens to pay an unwelcome call.

**Ecstasy:** A methamphetamine, may act similarly to cocaine. If not admitted to, the withdrawal effects persons may experience when being treated could also be disastrous and lead to further complications if COVID-19 is present.

**Opioids,** such as morphine, is another substance of abuse. Since opioids act in the brainstem to slow breathing, their use not only puts the user at risk of life-

threatening or fatal overdose, it may also cause a harmful decrease in oxygen in the blood (hypoxaemia). Chronic respiratory disease is already known to increase overdose mortality risk among people taking opioids, and thus diminished lung capacity from COVID-19 could similarly endanger this population.

Persons therefore need to utilize other modalities to beat the panic, fear and anxiety of COVID-19. There is a risk of increased substance abuse in this pandemic as persons continue to use or abuse various substances most of which will target the vulnerable lungs. A compromised respiratory system is not what is required at this time. **Stay safe, Stay off drugs.**

National Council on Substance Abuse

The National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) was established as a Statutory Board in May 1995 under the aegis of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Our mandate is based on drug demand reduction in schools and the wider community.

The Organization is managed by a Board of Directors and a team of trained staff who coordinates and implements specific programmes and projects for various target audiences in Barbados.

Substance abuse is a major menace to public health; therefore we aim to be a beacon of hope, strength and empowerment as we encourage children, parents, youth, and older adults to maintain drug-free lifestyles.



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Twitter: [https://twitter.com/NCSA\\_Barbados](https://twitter.com/NCSA_Barbados)

Instagram: ncsabarbados

YouTube: NCSA Barbados



# Workplace COVID-19 Prevention Tips

Have closed waste bins available for employees.

Employees: Dispose paper tissues after use in a closed waste bin.

Most important: Do not touch your face.

Since the Coronavirus might survive several hours in the air, regularly open windows to let fresh air in. Disinfect the screens of your mobile phone, desktop, laptop, your keyboard and mouse on a regular basis.

Avoid using any public transportation during rush hours.

Wash your hands. This should be the first thing you do after entering a new building. Wash your wrists and the space between your fingers too.

During meetings, keep your distance to your co-workers.

Avoid foods and drinks which weaken your immune system (alcohol, cigarettes, sweets, unhealthy foods).

Stay calm, though this virus is contagious it’s mortality is low, keep that in mind.

**National Council on Substance Abuse**  
**KEEP YOUR DISTANCE**

**SOCIAL DISTANCING**  
6 FT

**AVOID TOUCHING AND CROWDS**

**WASH YOUR HANDS FOR 20 SECONDS WITH SOAP**

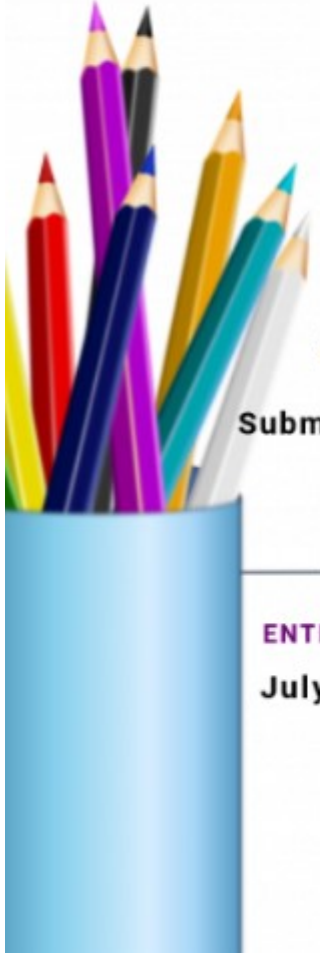
Let Us Play Our Part In Ridding Covid 19



# NCSA Art & Writing Contest



As we observe International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on June 26th.



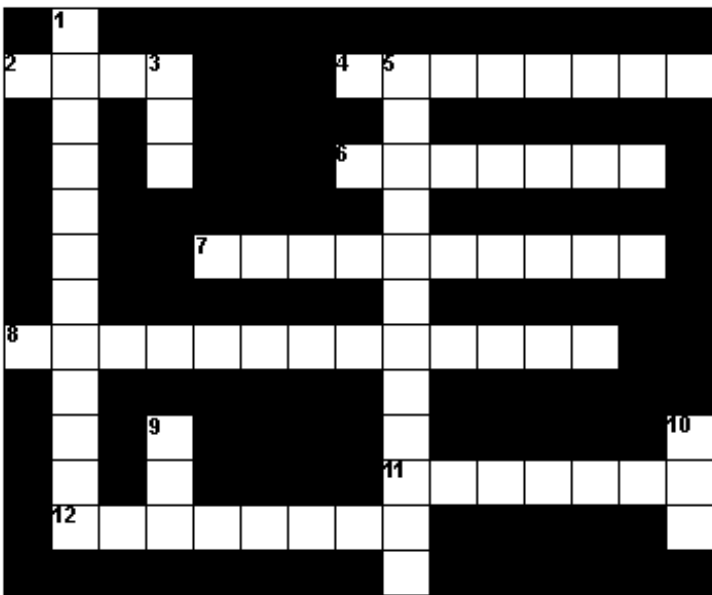
## Contest Theme: "Bee Drug Free!"



Submit your Posters, Poems or Short Stories to [nca.pr@barbados.gov.bb](mailto:nca.pr@barbados.gov.bb)

Open to children ages 8-17

**ENTRY DEADLINE:**  
July 12th 2020



### ACROSS

2. Fiber of the cannabis plant; used to make cord
4. Stimulant found in tea, coffee, and some sodas
6. Drugs derived from poppies
7. Alcohol's effect on the central nervous system
8. An imagined experience; can be caused by drugs or disorders such as schizophrenia
11. Nerve cells
12. Drug in tobacco that is a stimulant

### DOWN

1. Process by which alcohol is made
3. Also known as "angel dust"
5. Real name for the drug "speed"
9. Abbreviation for tetrahydrocannabinol
10. Another name for the drug "acid"