

Fallon Carnes:

Hi, my name is Fallon Carnes. I'm a certified social worker. I work on the Behavioral Health Unit at Ephraim McDowell, and I've been in this role for approximately a year and a half.

I definitely think that there will be some long-term mental health effects from COVID-19. I think because we have to look at COVID-19 and all the impact that the different areas that have been impacted as far as financial insecurities, job loss, illness. I think the whole world has experienced, you know, witness these things even if you haven't personally experienced them, you have seen how they have affected the world as a whole so I definitely do think that there will be long-term lasting effects.

When we think of PTSD in general, we think of some symptoms being nightmares, fear, increased anxiety, irritability and I think that those are all going to be the same with COVID-19. I think that any time we are maybe thrown into a situation such as job loss, I think that those can trigger some of the fear that people have experienced during COVID-19. So I definitely think that there's going to be similar symptoms between the COVID-19 stress and PTSD.

Some ways that we can manage PTSD at home would be some meditation, deep breathing, exercise, also make sure that you're eating healthy and balanced meals during the day, try to get as much sleep as possible. You can also try to still stay in contact with your support system, so reach out, phone calls, text messages.

A good time to seek treatment for symptoms of PTSD, especially around COVID-19, would be any time that you are impacted in your daily routines. So anytime that anxiety or fear is impacting your role as maybe a parent, a coworker, with education, school, and also anytime that you're having any thoughts of self-harm or suicidal thoughts, that's always a good time to reach out for services and help.

I think family members can help a loved one that is experiencing PTSD by validating their feelings. Don't minimize what the person is going through. So we all experience things differently and it all impacts us differently so I think if a loved one comes to you and they are opening up and telling you how they are feeling, I think it is important for you to just be there and to listen and to validate and again, not minimize their symptoms or their feelings, don't tell them, "oh, well it wasn't that hard on me," or, "oh, maybe just get over it." Those are not going to be a helpful thing so again, I think just being there and just letting them open up and talk to you.

So Ephraim McDowell has an outpatient office that is offering inpatient and Telehealth services and that would be a psychiatrist that you can meet with as well as a nurse practitioner for medication management and they also have an LCSW that offers counseling services so those are the outpatient services that Ephraim offers. Then inpatient, we also have a Crisis Stabilization Unit in the hospital and so that is a service that we offer if you are in a crisis due to the symptoms of PTSD, again, like I mentioned earlier, if you're having thoughts of self-harm or you just really feel like the stress and anxiety is starting to interfere with your daily living, then those are some services that we offer.

Because COVID-19 has been a novel virus, a lot of us have never experienced something like this pandemic in our lifetime so I think that we don't really know the long-term effects of the pandemic that we've been going through for the past year and a half. So I think it's very important to pay attention to any changes in your behaviors or your loved ones' behaviors and pay attention to the early warning signs. That way you can try to intervene and learn to manage those in a healthy way and just remember that Ephraim McDowell is always here to help you get through this difficult time.