



Recognizing and Accommodating: Tips for Supporting Individuals with Behavioral Health Conditions

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Many live with invisible, even undiagnosed disabilities. It is not uncommon for the signs and symptoms of disabling conditions to be misunderstood as the person being difficult or even dangerous.

If we understand the signs and symptoms as clues to a behavioral health disorder or disorders, we can help individuals access the services and supports they need to improve their quality of life at home, work and in the community. By doing so we can do our part to stop stigma, the biggest barrier to accessing behavioral health services.

In Their Own Words.... What is it like to live with a hidden disability or condition?

“.....your vision narrows and begins to close down; it is like trying to watch TV through terrible static, where you can sort of see the picture but not really; where you cannot ever see people’s faces, except almost if there is a close-up; where nothing has edges. The air seems thick and resistant, as though it were full of mushed-up bread. Becoming _____ is like going blind, the darkness at first gradual, then encompassing; it is like going deaf, hearing less and less until a terrible silence is all around you, until you cannot make any sound of your own to penetrate the quiet. It is like feeling your clothing slowing turning into wood on your body, a stiffness in the elbows and the knees progressing to a terrible weight and an isolating immobility that will atrophy you and in time destroy you.”

What is the author describing?

Source: *The Noonday Demon*, by Andrew Solomon, Scribner publishers, (2015)

Poll Question

- A Bipolar Disorder
- Covid-19
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Substance Misuse
- A Traumatic Brain Injury
- Schizophrenia

Depression: Signs & Symptoms

Signs: what others may notice

- Angry outbursts
- Irritable towards others/ annoyed about seemingly small things
- Weight lost or gained
- Seem distracted
- Isolates
- Complaints of aches and pains
- Slowed speaking or body movements

Symptoms: what the person is feeling/experiencing

- Sad, tearful
- Feeling worthless, guilty, focused on past failures (real or perceived)
- Can't muster energy for tasks large or small
- Insomnia or oversleeping
- Can't take pleasure in life's usual delights

“ _____ is the devil on your shoulder that keeps whispering in your ear and, no matter what you try, the little demon won’t stop. He hasn’t stopped in the almost nine years I’ve lived with the illness, and he’s not about to stop now. He’s just quieted down a bit. I’d call him my companion but that would imply a degree of friendship, and there’s no way in hell I’m the little devil’s friend.”

What is the author describing?

Source: *New York Times*, *Living with _____ Coffee and Friends*
10.23.14

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Schizophrenia : Signs & Symptoms

Signs: what others may notice and how they interpret (or misinterpret) what they see

- Doesn't always make sense when they speak
- Isolating from friends & family
- Appear to be lazy or unmotivated
- Poor hygiene
- Flat affect/poor eye contact with others

Symptoms: what the person is feeling/experiencing

- Disorganized thoughts (word salad)
- Delusions (false beliefs)
- Hallucinations (hearing or seeing things/people that are not present)
- Sleeping difficulties
- Thoughts of self harm/injury

“.....grocery shopping is a massive _____ trigger for me. This may sound absolutely ridiculous to you. But the idea of figuring out what to eat, making a list, picking out products, and enduring the actual shopping trip induces extreme _____ in me. I once had an _____ attack trying to pick out napkins because there were too many varieties and I burst into tears in the middle of the aisle. Another time the crowd of people was too much for me and I abandoned my cart and resigned myself to take-out.....Things that are simple or no-brainers for others cause me extreme _____.

What is the author describing?

Source: *Interview with the author Scott Stossel, mentalhealth.org.uk retrieved 4.2.20*

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Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Signs: what others may notice and how they interpret (or misinterpret) what they see

- Restlessness
- Person is easily startled
- Resistive to suggestions or trying new things
- Difficulty making decisions
- Appears tense
- Sweating/appears shaky
- Perfectionist

Symptoms: what the person is feeling/experiencing

- Feels irritable, worried and “keyed up”
- Finds it hard to let go of worry, may worry about excessive worrying
- Worrying that is out of proportion to concerns/events
- Catastrophic thinking
- Muscle aches, headaches, stomach trouble

By that point my vestigial self had grown used to my depressed self, with her somber mood and tenuous hold on life. Now a newcomer arrived. I seemed to have split into three: my shell-shocked self, my depressed self and a brazen hypomaniac self. We could practically hear the new girl sizing us up, cackling. Under her reign, we slept two hours a night. We ate half a sandwich and two potato chips a day. We packed the children's lunchboxes at 3 a.m. We began to study for the Medical College Admission Test (MCATs)....”

What is the author describing?

Source: Linda Logan in the New York Times 4.26.13 bipolar disorder

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Bipolar Disorder (manic/hypomanic phase): Signs & Symptoms

Signs: what others may notice and how they interpret (or misinterpret) what they see

- Person isn't sleeping or sleeping very little
- Unusual talkativeness
- Hard to follow what they are saying
- Acts irritated
- Very self-involved, very sure of themselves
- Increased goal directed activity observed at school, home, work
- Risk taking behavior with possible adverse consequences, e.g. excessive shopping, sexual activities, business ventures

Symptoms: what the person is feeling/experiencing

- Distractible
- Feeling very energetic
- Agitation
- Psychosis-delusions
- Racing thoughts

I am a 17 year survivor..... I have many lasting symptoms of _____, but because my parents believed I had a full recovery, I discounted what I felt. I forget names of my students and co workers. I can not call words fluently. Movies and books are no longer enjoyable because I don't remember them. It all came to a devastating blow when I hurt my Best Friend. We had plans to spend time together. She had to change the plans. The change sent me into orbit. I could not handle the change in plans and I was mean to her because of it. I hurt someone that I love. Spontaneity is so hard for me. Change is hard for me. I get mad so easily. I say things I don't mean and find myself apologizing often.

What is the author describing?

Source: www.brainline.org

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Traumatic Brain Injury: Signs & Symptoms

Signs: what others may notice and how they interpret (or misinterpret) what they see

- Difficulty following directions
- Disorganized
- Impulsive
- Limp/can't use one arm/hand
- Has noticeable scars on their face and/or head
- Has a scar across their throat
- Wears a eye patch
- Get's stuck on topics/actions
- Argumentative/self involved
- Lies
- Is manipulative

Symptoms: what the person is feeling/experiencing

- Hard time understanding what is said and what is written
- Hard time expressing ideas and feelings
- Can't easily figure out how to negotiate new situations
- Trouble reading nonverbal cues
- Can remember old information like special holidays, family members but struggle with remembering what happened yesterday or even 20 minutes ago
- Sees double
- Doesn't understand why old friends aren't in touch

“The chronicity of _____ is really a kind of fatalism writ large. If an _____ knows in his heart he is going to use someday, why not today? But if a thin reed of hope appears, the possibility that it will not always be so, things change. You live another day and then get up and do it again. Hope is oxygen to someone who is suffocating on despair.”

What is the author describing?

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/20/magazine/20Carr-t.html>

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Substance Misuse: Signs and Symptoms

Signs: what others may notice and how they interpret (or misinterpret) what they see

- Can drink their friends “under the table”
- Family & friends notice the person isn’t as present/available and/or is preoccupied
- Misses days at work
- Neglecting typical self-care

Symptoms: what the person is feeling/experiencing

- Preoccupied with obtaining the substance
- Takes increasing amounts of the substance to feel “normal”
- Irritated with those around them who raise concerns about their substance use

Encourage Appropriate Professional Help



- **Types of Professionals**
 - Doctors (primary care physicians)
 - Psychiatrists
 - Social workers, counselors, and other mental health professionals
 - Certified peer specialists
- **Types of Professional Help**
 - "Talk" therapies
 - Medication
 - Other professional supports



This is like the worst flu you can imagine. It presents with, you know, with the onset of fever and a dry cough, bad headache, bad muscle aches. But then as it progresses and you get different nasty symptoms, like the dry cough turns into a productive cough and then you're... there are aches and pains. And now just huge fatigue. I can't accomplish anything right now.

What is the author describing?

Source: <https://radio.wpsu.org/post/first-person-account-covid-19-centre-county-man-shares-his-story>

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Covid-19:

Signs: what others may notice and how they interpret (or misinterpret) what they see

- Coughing
- Low energy
- Looks no different than usual

Symptoms: what the person is feeling/experiencing

- Coughing (dry)
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste and smell
- Fever/chills
- Very Tired
- Tightness in the chest
- Feel no different than usual

Sources: MD Dept of Health
<https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/>

An unanticipated and previously unknown medical condition that can have behavioral health implications for the people we support and ourselves

The Covid-19 Virus:

Covid-19, still new, but this much is known

- The majority of people affected will have mild-moderate symptoms
- Thus far, experience across the globe and early research suggests those most vulnerable to severe illness and death are older adults and those with underlying medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, lung disorders, those living with a compromised immune system)
- In Maryland and around the country, facilities such as nursing homes and assisted living settings have been particularly hard hit

Many of Us are Living with Hidden Disabilities & Conditions Such as.....

George Clooney

Traumatic Brain Injury

Selma Blair

Multiple Sclerosis

Lady Gaga

Depression

Demi Lovato

Bipolar Disorder

Robert Downey Jr.

Substance Misuse

Prince Charles

COVID-19

By disclosing their own experiences, these prominent individuals are helping to smash stereotypes, start conversations and reduce stigma around many common disabilities & conditions

Those with Behavioral Health Conditions are Overrepresented in Special Populations, and often have more than one condition (not an exhaustive list)

- The incarcerated
- The homeless
- Those receiving in/outpatient mental health services
- Those receiving in/outpatient substance misuse treatment
- Those affected by intimate partner violence
- Those living with a traumatic brain injury
- Those who have experienced more than 4 Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Service members, especially those who have served in areas of conflict
- Those who die by suicide

The potential behavioral health implications of the pandemic among those we support

- Access to essentials, medicine, food, housing, income
- Access to treatment and ongoing support

Potentially resulting in exacerbation of or initiation of:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Substance use/misuse

Behavioral Health Administration's Direct Link to online recovery support

<https://bha.health.maryland.gov/Documents/Online%20Recovery%20and%20Support%20Resources%203.24.20.pdf>

Resources:

- Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, provides accessible information for members of Maryland's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community <https://odhh.maryland.gov/coronavirus/>
- The Office of Governor Larry Hogan, Maryland Unites: Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, offers opportunities for Marylanders to support their fellow citizens through volunteering opportunities such as Meals on Wheels <https://governor.maryland.gov/marylandunites/>

Strategies for Communication by email/text

- Short and direct subject line
- Ask open ended questions
- Keep it brief
- Follow up and encourage questions
- Summarize a long email chain into one email that includes the summary of the conversation and any next steps, provide links to resources relevant to the conversation
- Use humor, emojis and memes!

The potential behavioral health implications of the pandemic among ourselves and our family & friends. It is important to acknowledge that given the uncertainty of the current situation the resources that follow are for all of us.

Kessler reframes the Stages of Grief

- **Denial:** *“This virus won’t affect us”*
- **Anger:** *“You are making me stay home and taking away my activities”*
- **Bargaining:** *“Okay, if I social distance for 2 weeks everything will be better, right?”*
- **Sadness:** *“I don’t know if this will end”*
- **Acceptance:** *“This is happening: I have to figure out how to proceed”*
- **Meaning:** *“We can still connect, take care of each other and ourselves”*

Source: <https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>

What should I do if I have an existing mental health condition?

- Continue with your treatment plan, monitor yourself for any new symptoms and reach out to your treatment provider
- Explore if your provider offers telehealth treatment options so you can check in with them/have a session

What if I am feeling anxious or stressed related to Covid-19?

Everyone reacts differently, reactions to the outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health status and that of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening use of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs

Recovery and Wellness Support Resources for the Covid-19 Outbreak

Provides a collection of resources for online supports including virtual 12-step meetings and Maryland county warm-lines

[https://bha.health.maryland.gov/Documents/Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Wellness%20and%20Recovery%20Resources%204.1.2020%20FINAL%20REVISED%20\(1\).pdf](https://bha.health.maryland.gov/Documents/Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Wellness%20and%20Recovery%20Resources%204.1.2020%20FINAL%20REVISED%20(1).pdf)

State and National Resources for those experiencing mental health related challenges

- If you are experiencing a crisis, please call Maryland's Helpline at 211, press 1, text your zip code to 898-211, or visit 211md.org
- SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline provides 24/7, 365-day-a-year crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters. This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories: 1-800-985-5990, resources are also available online at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/warning-signs-risk-factors>

Keep in mind, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has continually pointed out that the vast majority of individuals, even if they do get sick will NOT become terribly ill

What can I do to support myself?

- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage, take breaks from watching/reading/listening to news stories
- Control what you can; taking care of your body, eating well balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs
- Connect with others (by phone or video chat)
- Prepare for a couple of months at home/limited community access, plan for disruptions to work, school, shopping etc.

Keeping Grounded: What you can control to reduce stress and anxiety

- Exercise
- Mediate
- Talk to friends and family by phone or virtually
- Get regular sleep
- Eat healthy food

Staying Grounded: Exercise

- Check with your health care provider before beginning if you are new to exercise or are living with any medical conditions that may impact your ability to engage in exercise
- Walk around your neighborhood, if that is not possible do a walking video/online video
- Pump up your workout with bodyweight exercises such as planks and pushups, incorporate weights
- Do stretching or yoga, many free options online

Staying Grounded: Meditate

- Simple breathing techniques can be done anywhere, any time-take in a long breath over 5-8 counts, hold it for 5-8 counts, exhale slowly for 5-8 counts. If you want, put one hand on your belly and one over heart, repeat at least 3 times and more if you wish
- Go online for additional meditation resources

Staying Grounded: Talk to Friends & Family, options include

- Make a phone call
- Facetime feature on your smart device
- Skype
- Facebook live
- Google Hangouts

Staying Grounded: Get Regular Sleep

- Most adults benefit from 7-8 hours of sleep nightly
- Go to bed and get up at the same time daily (even on weekends)
- Avoid heavy meals, alcohol and nicotine in the hours before bed
- Keep the bedroom quiet, cool and dark
- Use the hour before bed for quiet time: no strenuous exercise or bright/artificial light (e.g., from TV or device screens)

Source: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/sleep-deprivation-and-deficiency>

Staying Grounded: Healthy Food

- **Fruit:** fresh, frozen, canned
- **Vegetables:** fresh, frozen, canned
- **Grains:** bread, pasta, breakfast cereals and tortillas are examples, whole grains are preferable to refined grains (think whole wheat versus white bread)
- **Dairy:** milk, cheese & yogurt. For the approximately **65 percent** of the human population has a reduced ability to digest lactose after infancy, alternatives include calcium fortified soy and nut milk, cheese and yogurt alternatives
- **Protein:** Beans, peas, poultry, nuts, seeds, processed soy products, eggs, fish and meats

Source: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>
<https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/lactose-intolerance>

Special Considerations for Older Adults

- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19
- Only consult legitimate sources, like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for information about COVID-19
- Engage in activities that bring comfort or joy
- Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs
- Make time to unwind and remember that strong feelings will fade
- Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member
- Call your health care provider if stress reactions interfere with your daily activities for several days in a row
- Avoid making major life decisions

Resources for Older Adults

Maryland Mental Health Association resources for Older Adults/coronavirus
<https://www.mhamd.org/coronavirus/older-adult-resources/>

Resource Better Health While Aging Website,
<https://betterhealthwhileaging.net/coronavirus-and-older-adults-3-27-2020/>

Mutual Aid for Covid-19, connects community volunteers with those who need support, <https://www.covaid.co/>

Resources for Older Adults

Be especially aware of scams related to COVID-19. The Federal Trade Commission has identified several of scams and is offering tips to protect yourself and others, go to the following link to learn how to protect yourself:

<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/coronavirus-scams-what-ftc-doing>.

Find addition resources for Older Adults on the Maryland Department of Health's website here:

<https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/older-adults>

Resources: Exercise

Physical Activity Guidelines from the National Institutes of Health

- Children and Teens should be physically active for at least 60 minutes on most, if not all days. (can be done in small chunks over the course of the day)
- Adults should do a minimum of 2 hours and 30 minutes 5 days a week of moderate intensity aerobic activity a week to avoid development of chronic diseases and gradual weight gain. (can be done in small chunks over the course of the day)

Source: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/get-active/physical-activity-guidelines.htm>

Resources: Exercise

Online and Free Exercise Videos-Free

- *Walk at Home*, Leslie Sansone's videos offer easy walking routines <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVI6ZdslZz2Zj-34bMJFPbg>
- *Yoga with Adriene*, free yoga videos for all levels <https://yogawithadriene.com/>
- *Fitness Blender*, free fitness videos <https://www.fitnessblender.com/>
- *IvanaExercise*, three videos that feature exercise routines for those living with physical and intellectual disabilities https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPXE-jqHLk40IYltj_qX4dQ
- This article in the Huffington Post that features videos with exercises designed for people with disabilities https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/exercises-to-do-at-home-if-you-have-a-disability_uk_5878b3bfe4b0f3b82a37408e?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAKK_LiAUlrNnMxuDkb0YxPM2FMm9Tcjb3JEzWQ610DI0ClvULCWm5XvbvoakXuHTTaFzLVf1OUEUjiiNnTrD5Ld7WydkS2W5EsirXjjAxwBSBtyyllxXXzgheGGoalcnk7BbkmPiFAIWiZqEQKDYO_pgPYiAQeVoedUaNeRoyuYs

Resources: Meditation

- National Institutes of Health, National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, benefits of meditation
<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/meditation/overview.htm>
- Free Meditation Resources
 - UCLA Mindful app <https://www.uclahealth.org/ucla-mindful>
 - Fragrant Heart website, audio meditations [Guided Meditation Audio - Listen for free](#)
- The Daily Calm YouTube channel, offer 10-minute meditations and calming videos <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZToicYcHIOU>

Resources: Talk to Friends & Family

Business Insider website provides a number of ways to connect including:

- *Google Docs*, share "pandemic diaries" entries, recipes, tips for movies, shows, music, etc.
- *Houseparty*, a face to face social network app, allows up to 8 users (and their faces) at a time <https://houseparty.com/>
- *Marco Polo*, this app combines features of texting, social media and video chat <https://www.marcopolo.me/>
- *Netflix Party extension*, use this feature to host a movie night (for Netflix members, requires Google Chrome) <https://www.netflixparty.com/>
- *Google Hangouts Meet* <https://gsuite.google.com/products/meet/>

Source: [9 ways millennials can stay connected during the coronavirus pandemic](#)

Resources: Get Regular Sleep

- The Sleep Foundation has a wealth of information on sleep
<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/>
- Dr. Matthew Walker is a sleep scientist and researcher at the University of California Berkeley (UCLA) Center for Human Sleep Science. In addition to his academic work he has published a best selling book, “Why We Sleep,” and delivered a TED talk on sleep and how to improve our sleep https://www.ted.com/talks/matt_walker_sleep_is_your_superpower?language=en

Resources: Healthy Food

Recipes for healthy hearts, minds and bodies!

- My Plate Healthy Kitchen
<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplatekitchen>
- Blue Zones Recipes <https://www.bluezones.com/recipes/>
- The Cleveland Clinic
<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/departments/wellness/patient-resources/recipes>
- The Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/recipes>
- SNAP-ED Connection, U.S Department of Agriculture, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-education/recipes>

Resources: Behavioral Health

- Maryland Department of Health <https://health.maryland.gov/pages/home.aspx>
- Maryland Behavioral Health Administration <https://bha.health.maryland.gov/pages/index.aspx>
- Behavioral Health Administration's Direct Link to online recovery support <https://bha.health.maryland.gov/Documents/Online%20Recovery%20and%20Support%20Resources%203.24.20.pdf>
- Brain Injury Association of Maryland www.biamd.org 410-448-2924
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Maryland Crisis Hotline: dial 211 and press one, callers will be routed to resources in their local area

Resources: online support groups

- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) online caregiver and recovery support groups starting in April go to:
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/nami-family-support-group-online-meeting-tickets-101125639510?mc_cid=1aa87242b8&mc_eid=3e8473f886
- Brain Injury Support Group for Caregivers on Zoom, go to:
www.severebicaregivers.weebly.com for more information and to register go to <https://zoom.us/j/8546290864>

Resources from the Disability Community

- Brain Injury Association of America <https://www.biausa.org/brain-injury/community/covid-19-resources>
- National Center on Applied Person-Centered Practices and Systems <https://ncapps.acl.gov/covid-19-resources.html>
- National Disability Rights Network <https://www.ndrn.org/issues/covid-19/>
- Green Mountain Self Advocates <http://www.gmsavt.org/>
- Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center TBI Resources to Help Stay Healthy During the Covid-19 Pandemic https://msktc.org/sites/default/files/MSKTC-TBI_COVID-19-Resource-Flyer.pdf

Disability Community Advocates Offer Excellent Resources...

- Brain Injury Association of America <https://www.biausa.org/brain-injury/community/covid-19-resources>
- National Center on Applied Person-Centered Practices and Systems <https://ncapps.acl.gov/covid-19-resources.html>
- National Disability Rights Network <https://www.ndrn.org/issues/covid-19/>
- Green Mountain Self Advocates <http://www.gmsavt.org/>
- Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center TBI Resources to Help Stay Healthy During the Covid-19 Pandemic https://msktc.org/sites/default/files/MSKTC-TBI_COVID-19-Resource-Flyer.pdf

Resources: COVID-19

- Maryland Department of Health: Covid-19 Portal: <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/>
- Handwashing tutorial and tips for staying healthy at home and in the community <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/world/coronavirus-preparation-preparedness.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage#preventinfection>
- Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QficvVNIxTI>

Stop The Stigma

Contact Information

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