Three faces of the COVID-19 we must be alert to

- A guide to breaking the negative spiral -
COVID-19 disease is spreading around us.

Few of us are aware that the virus actually has not one, but three different “infectious features”.

Did you know these features affect you before we are aware of them?
The three "infectious features" compose a negative spiral.

The first feature “sickness”

The second feature “fear”

The third feature “stigma”

“I can keep getting powerful if no one pays attention.”
The first feature is **sickness**.

We know that the virus spreads through physical contact with infected people. Once infected, we can have cold symptoms. Worse, we may experience pneumonia.
The second feature is **fear**.

This virus brings us strong *fear and anxiety* as it is invisible and no vaccines and drugs are available yet. Uncertainty triggers fear that can be rapidly spread among us.

Building up in our minds, fear and anxiety weaken our ability to **look, listen, and link**.
The third feature is **stigma**.

Fear and anxiety trigger human survival instincts.

Because of that, we stigmatize the possibly infected person. Stigma destroys our trusts and social ties by driving us to distance and discriminate against them.
Why do we stigmatize others?

Fear of the invisible enemies (virus)

Perceiving a specific target as an enemy that can be seen, and targeting them for hate

Feeling secured by stigmatizing and distancing targets of hate

I said something I shouldn't have, but...

But those words could come back to me anytime... I'm worried...

The enemy is the virus.

The enemy is substituted.

XX Area is contaminated.

That guy coughing.. must be corona.

They're from country XX. They must be dangerous.

Ceasing to look at the real enemy
I don't want the kids of healthcare workers to go to kindergarten.

Hospital XX seems dangerous.

XX Area is contaminated.

That guy coughing... must be corona.

I don't want the kids of healthcare workers to go to kindergarten.

It's unbelievable that they aren't using masks.

Avoid infections

Identify potential threats

Distance from the virus

Survive

Stigma grows this way...

Stigma comes from our mindset of labeling “dangerous” and “germs” on specific group of people, residents of a certain area and occupations.
How do the three “infectious features” structure a negative spiral?

1. Uncertainty and invisibility of the virus create a strong sense of fear.

2. Human survival instincts tell us to distance the suspected.

3. Fear of being stigmatized keeps us from getting medical attention even when needed, which ends spreading the disease.

The virus grows power on us through a negative spiral.
Hey, don’t we pay too much attention to bad news on the virus, or obsessively think of it?

"That person is coughing... it's corona, isn't it?"
"Corona is spreading in that area, so let's no go buying stuffs from there anymore..."
"I have a fever, but I’m not telling anyone about it because I'm scared..."

We are helping the virus spread by our thoughts and behaviors.

How can we stop it??
Against the first feature

Helping protect yourself from the virus by
“Washing your hands”
“Covering your cough”
*with tissue or an elbow
“Avoiding the crowds”

etc...

It is important to take action to fight against the virus not only for yourself but also for the people around you.
Against the second feature

Fear brings us blind and weakens our ability to

Look

Listen

and

Link.

Fear and anxiety are necessary for protecting ourselves, but they can make it difficult for us to act rationally.
Against the second feature

Maintain our ability to look at ourselves.

Observe yourself from distance.

- Stop and take a break. (Take a deep breath. Why not a cup of tea?)
- Try to sort out the current situation.
- See yourself from multiple angles. (Thoughts, emotions, behaviors, etc.)
Maintain our ability to **listen** to ourselves.

Do you find something different in yourself?

- Aren't you following just the bad news about the virus?
- Are you obsessed with the virus all the time?
- Are you spending less time on hobbies and connections with those close to you?
- Has your daily routine been disturbed?

Is there anything you can keep doing as usual?
Against the third feature

Maintain our ability to link ourselves to resources.

Make your decisions for your own safety and health.

- Limit and distance yourself from information on the virus.
- Keep up with your regular routine of life.
- Create a comfortable environment.
- Acknowledge what you can do right now.
- Try to work on something that you can do in the given situation.
- Stay in touch with who you feel comfortable with.

Let's go for a walk!
Against the third feature

Fueling fear leads to stigma.

- Help spread credible information.
- Disengage from discriminatory language and behaviors.

Get rid of them!!

Agree!
Against the third feature

Appreciate and respect everyone responding to fight against the virus.

- families with small children
- elderly people
- those who are treated and their family
- those who are staying at home
- healthcare workers
- those supporting society through daily life

Of course, we are all in this fight and can contribute to it.
Summary: For us to overcome the COVID-19

The COVID-19 has affected our lives in the form of these three “infectious features”. This fight against the virus may become a long one. We all can contribute to this fight by doing our part.

Let us all in one and get free of the virus!
References/Materials


• International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Psychosocial Centre (2020) "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for Staff, Volunteers and Communities in an Outbreak of Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) Available at: https://pscentre.org/?resource=mhpss-ifrc-psc-covid-19-guidance-japanese (Accessed: 2020/03/23)


Three faces of the COVID-19 we must be alert to.
- A guide to breaking the negative spiral -


Published by: Japanese Red Cross Society, Novel Coronavirus Infectious Disease Control Task Force

We are One Team!!

[Chief Editor]
Suwa Red Cross Hospital Reo Morimitsu
(Roster member, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support)

[Editors and contributors]
Japanese Red Cross Medical Center Keiko Akiyama (Illustration)
Kyoko Miyamoto

Ise Red Cross Hospital Mari Nakai

Headquarters, Administration Sector Otohiko Hori

Disaster Management and Social Welfare Department Marika Takeguchi
Tomokazu Yamauchi

International Department Nobuaki Sato
Musubi Yata

Disaster Medical Management Supervisor Yoshikazu Maruyama

Publishing, modifying, copying, and translating the contents without permission is prohibited. When citing, printing, and distributing the data electronically, please specify the source.