



Resilience crucial in tackling emotional stress

The coronavirus outbreak does not just affect citizens' physical health. Many people are also concerned about the shortages of surgical masks, hygiene products and even food, causing them to search frantically for supplies. The long-term harm caused by these negative emotional outbursts may well be more severe than the virus itself. A research team led by **Prof Oi Ling SIU, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Chair Professor of Applied Psychology** and **Director of the Wofoo Joseph Lee Consulting and Counselling Psychology Research Centre**, is giving citizens tips on how to protect themselves against the disease and build up resilience and stay positive so as to fight the pandemic with sufficient psychological capital.

Prof Siu explains that physical health and mental wellbeing are closely interconnected. Immoderate negative emotions may affect people's decisions and actions in implementing effective disease-prevention measures, and panic often induces irrational behaviours such as blind conformity and superstition. Therefore the long-term effects of negative emotions on psychological health may be even more severe than the virus itself. On the other hand, having strong psychological capital can greatly benefit physical and mental wellbeing.



According to Prof Siu, **“psychological capital”** refers to the four factors necessary in dealing with adversity and challenges, namely **self-efficacy, hope, optimism** and **resilience**. Of these, Prof Siu believes that resilience is crucial during times of adversity and that this ability to adapt to difficult conditions and recover or bounce back is not only a psychological quality, but also a factor related to our body’s immune system.

An earlier study led by Prof Siu showed that medical staff who scored highly for resilience in the questionnaire also had higher levels of immunoglobulin A (IgA) in their immune system, which made them less likely to fall sick during the course of pandemic prevention.

Tips for the community on how to increase resilience

Correct attitude	Application in the current pandemic situation
Confront hardships and adversity	Read accurate information about the pandemic and learn to understand about viral transmission.
Reduce cognitive distortions or “thinking traps”	Do not panic. Just stay calm.
Expand your views and look for clear evidence to support rumours and hearsay	If you receive any updates about the pandemic, try to verify them through official reports or credible media sources.
Keep a moderately relaxed attitude	When news about the pandemic affects your emotions negatively, take a break and do something else, such as listening to music or housework.
Seek help and support from family and friends	Talk to family and friends about your concerns (for instance looking for surgical masks) and help and encourage each other. It is also good to exchange information and even solve one another’s difficulties.