

**ABCDs of battling against COVID-19****Prof. Dr. Sudhir V Shah\***, **Dr Heli Shah\*\***, **Dr. Chetsi Shah\*\*\***

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**INTRODUCTION**

World has declared an unprecedented war of recent times, against a deadly virus disease i.e. Covid 19. Covid-19, as we know, strikes in a rhythmic way i.e. in form of wave-I / wave-II. Many scientists have predicted the arrival of the third wave. Behavior of the masses, vaccination status, herd immunity, novel mutations of the virus, seasonal changes & environmental factors etc. are key points which will decide the further waves and the outcome. Since the Covid-19 menace is still rampant, there is no time for complacency; rather we need to be properly armed with knowledge on how to fight this infection. This can be nicely summed up in- Prevention is better than cure since there are a myriad of unknown post COVID complications which are difficult to deal with. Also, apart from COVID, there are other demons to be fought, like- Fear, Negativity, Ignorance as well as the myths created by different media. Through this article we aim to address golden clues on prevention along with other burning issues with tips on how to fight against fear, negativity and how to emerge as strong positive people. Most important protective weapons to remember- Mask is our vaccine, Sanitization is our medicine and physical distancing is our immunity.

The aggressive COVID-19 pandemic with its uncertainty has imposed great mental distress on the general population, the patients, healthcare providers as well as government & administration. The pandemic and its constant reporting in the media have increased psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and insomnia. Positive mental health and positive attitude are of paramount importance.

**EPIDEMIOLOGY OF COVID WAVES****Indian scenario**

- First cases in India were detected in three medical students around 30th January 2020 who had returned from Wuhan.

- In view of increasing cases , nationwide lockdown was imposed on 25th march which subsequently was taken off stepwise and it led to significant reduction in number of cases . Peak of new cases was seen in September and then first wave got contained in next few months.
- Slowly all the restrictions were lifted off with reopening of facilities, social gathering at marriages, festive activities, election rallies and sporting events. Simultaneously , new covid variants started appearing in month of January like Delta variant ( B.1.167.2) and alpha variant ( also called UK variant– B.1.17)
- All these culminated into the second wave of covid with progressive rise in new cases by February month and peak was seen in May 2021. However now in June ,it seems to be contained. Vaccination seems to play a major role which was initiated nationwide from 16th jan 2021.

**What about 3rd wave ? Will it come ?**

- On 5th may, Principal scientific advisor to Govt. of India stated that phase 3 is inevitable.
- It has already been there in countries like USA , UK , Italy.
- It seems likely that herd immunity from natural infection is variant specific .
- Epidemiologists have used susceptible infected recovered model and fractional interpolation model and predicted that 3rd wave will start by first week of August, it could be severe affecting young ones (mainly because they are as yet not vaccinated), and end in October with a peak in September. There may be new variant strains like delta plus.

Following “ABCD...” is a unique approach of creating Appropriate Behavior against Covid (ABC) in form of prevention, fighting against fear-stress & negativity and for battling against COVID-19. This requires Discipline, Self control, patience, courage, obedience and Compassion.

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**A's: Appreciation, Alertness, Attention, Acknowledge (feelings & share), Awareness**

Appreciate care givers and healthcare workers like Doctors, Nurses, Paramedics & frontline workers for supporting people affected with COVID-19 in your community. Acknowledge the role they play in saving lives and keeping your loved ones safe!

During uncertain times, information overload could happen, resulting in stress and anxiety. So, remaining attentive in getting the right information from reliable sources is the key.<sup>[1]</sup> Get the facts; not rumors and misinformation. Be alert. Do not spread the rumors and speculations.

**B's: Be positive (Corona Negative), be bold, be physically active, Balanced diet, Book Reading**

- Choose to focus on the positive things in your life, instead of dwelling on how bad you feel. Maintain a sense of hope, work to accept changes as they occur and try to keep problems in perspective.<sup>[2]</sup>
- Think of the best and beautiful things, speak the choicest best words & do your best. Always be impeccable and kind with your words.
- Staying physically active not only keeps your body healthy physically (keeping your risk of chronic health issues down and lowering your chances of acute illness, like COVID-19), it also helps in elevating mood and well-being
- Be a role model for children & neighbors

Have well-balanced, nutritious meals. Some of the food items which can help us keep healthy & burst stress are: Mediterranean, DASH diet & MIND diet emphasize adequate intake of fresh fruits, leafy green vegetables, legumes, berries, olive oil and nuts. Eat more proteins, less carbs and minimum fats. Watch calorie consumption consciously. Avoid non-vegetarian food. Take more water. Recent research has shown the efficacy of 'MIND Diet' in reducing cognitive decline. It is scientifically approved nutritional plan for triggering memory & Boosting brain functions & proven to be cardio-protective.

**C's: Compassion, Care, Creativity, Calm, Counselling, Caution, Cultivate happiness**

Be extra kind to others. This is a hard time for everyone. Humans across the world are sharing this experience with you. Let us share & care as we may all emerge with a renewed appreciation for our interconnectedness. Helping others in need is both critical to get through this well, and also creates more purpose to our lives and well-being.

Communicating with our dear and loved ones make us feel safe. Meet friends physically with a safe distance while wearing masks. Make a phone call, send a text, email or a letter & appreciate. Be supportive and offer words of encouragement. Communicate with full empathy. Care for elderly people.

Social Distancing is actually a misnomer, it is actually about physical distancing, while we must work hard to stay socially connected. Let's switch the phrase!

**D's: Disciplined behavior, Drug, Devotion, Donation**

As responsible citizens, we all must display disciplined appropriate behavior against covid. Also try to donate as much as you can from your savings for Corona relief funds. Our little efforts can bring huge difference into lives of many people.

Devotions are a great way to get closer to Supreme soul. A devotion is a quiet time that you spend praying, reading God's word, chanting and reflecting on your relationship with Him. Research has shown that pursuing path of religion and spirituality can help people cope with the effects of everyday stress.

**E's: Exercise: Yoga, Pranayam; Educate: Social distancing, Mask, Hand washing: Etiquette & hygiene**

Exercise releases endorphins and serotonin (hormones that make you feel good!), sharpens memory, and aids sleep. Staying physically active with exercise also lessens the risk of mood disorders, boosts energy, improves mood overall.

"Yoga" is not just a form of exercise but is a lifestyle for those who are immersing and expressing the principles of yoga in their day-to-day life.

Yoga help us to improve our health:

- ✓ It helps to de-stress, rejuvenate, feel energetic and fight negativity
- ✓ The breathing techniques help to improve lungs health & keep our minds calm
- ✓ Daily Yoga practice gives stability, flexibility and stretching capacity
- ✓ It also helps to heal chronic pain (e.g.: back pain)
- ✓ It helps regularize digestive, endocrine and autonomic nervous systems
- ✓ It helps stabilize blood pressure, pulse and respiration

**Educate** people with facts, share facts. Educate how important, it is to practice rules of safety against corona via physical distancing, wearing masks & sanitization which are vital things for protection. Distancing is our immunity, mask is our vaccine & sanitization is our

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medicine. These are unailing protective weapons against covid. Educate face, nose and hand hygiene.

**F's: Fight Fear, Follow friends, Forgive people, Finance handling**

Have no fear. We all are together in this tough time! This too shall pass one day. If you have too much anxiety and fear, seek psychiatry help sooner.

Letting go of grudges and bitterness can make way for improved health and peace of mind. Life is too short, there isn't enough time to love & appreciate people. Be non judgmental in judging & criticizing others. Please remember while it's nice to be right, it is more important to be kind. Forgiveness can lead to:<sup>[3]</sup>

- √ Healthier & better interpersonal relationships
- √ Improved mental health
- √ Less anxiety, stress ,depression and hostility
- √ Lower blood pressure
- √ A stronger immune system
- √ Improved heart health and self-esteem

**Friends** are the most beautiful gifts given by God. True friends are angels & protect you from everything. Find time each day to make virtual connections by phone, or Face Time or email or texts. If you're working remotely from home, ask your co-workers how they're doing and share coping tips.

Take time to look after your financial health. In current time, it's a core competence.

**G's: Generosity, Gratitude, God (surrender), Gargles**

Be generous in your act. Generosity is a great virtue. Give your belongings to those who are needy. Give money, time, clothes, medicines, kind words to those who need them the most. While giving, feel grateful that you are in a position to help people. Do not give with Ego or pride. Please don't discriminate. Practice gratitude .We are thankful to COVID-19 it has taught us adjustment and reduce our needs.. We are thankful to our front line health care warriors, policemen, & all others who are working day & night relentlessly for the safety of society. Thank God and express your gratitude to God before you go to sleep. Consider starting each day by listing things you are thankful for. Be grateful of each little things that you have !

Also remember Saline / Povidone iodine gargles is a good habit to fight against covid-19

**H's: Happiness, Humanity, Hospitalization, Health tips, Hot water**

Happiness is the purpose of life, whole aim & end of human existence. Happiness is ultimately a state of mind

that comes from good health, good relationship management, virtues like gratitude, appreciation, compassion, truth and nonviolence and also by inner experiences through spiritual practices. Remember You are in charge of your own happiness & nobody else. "Happiness is not about getting all you want, it is about enjoying all you have."

This time has made us rethink importance of our congenial coexistence with all life forms on this planet – other humans, living beings, & the earth itself. What is good for all living beings and the earth is virtually always in the best interest of humans, given the profound interconnectedness of all life. Ultimately, the survival, not only of other life forms on this planet, but also of our own, will depend upon our ability to recognize the oneness of all that exists and the importance, deeper significance of compassion for all life.<sup>[4]</sup> Live and let live.

Good nutrition , good digestion, proper sleep ,stress-free lifestyle and optimum exercise help boost our immunity & mood.

Patients with below characteristic are at higher risk need early hospitalization and early treatment.

- People who are elderly or have Comorbidities like Chronic lung disease /asthma ,Coronary artery disease or other heart ailments like CHF, Diabetes. Obesity, Immuno-compromised status including Cancer or AIDS .

**I's: Immunity enhancers (Medical, Ayush including Ayurveda & Homeopathy)**

A balanced diet fortified with Vitamin C, D, & A, Iron & Zinc are immunity boosting agents

Ayurveda, the traditional medicine system of India, has a huge potential in preventive and curative healthcare.

Ayurveda has depicted various rules and regimens (Charya), regarding diet and behavior to acclimatize seasonal enforcement easily without altering body homeostasis. Nasya (instillation of medicated drops) into the nose and Kavala Gandusha (gargling of mouth) are some of the daily regimens mentioned in classics are effective in maintaining nasal and oral hygiene.<sup>[5]</sup> Usage of turmeric, Cumin, Coriander, Saunth, piperamul, Ashwagandha, Guduchi & Yashtimadhu also boost up body's natural deference system.

**J's: Jovial<sup>[6]</sup>**

Always wear that lovely smile on your face. Be with people, with whom you can be yourself. Cherish wonderful memories that makes you happier.

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Crack down jokes at your own-selves, laugh and make people laugh . Be happy and enjoy simple pleasures & enjoy present moments. Life is really Beautiful.

### **K's: Kindness**

Kindness is an ornament of heart. It runs in some families as a genetic trait!

As stress goes up, a person's tolerance can go down. Try to be patient, kind and helpful. Do what you can to have a positive influence on others. Remember one small act of kindness can help changing many lives & uplift your soul.

### **L's: Love, Laughter, Light**

Love people & love each and every living sentient being of this earth. Love heals us. Love people genuinely, each living being deserves to be loved & cared for!

A good belly laugh doesn't just lighten the load mentally. It lowers cortisol, our body's stress hormone, and boosts brain chemicals called endorphins, which help elevating your mood. Laugh from your core of existence. Laugh at yourself. A cup of coffee with family or friends is all you need to bring your stress levels back to normal.<sup>[7]</sup>

Spend time playing games or music with children.<sup>[8]</sup>

### **M's: Medication, Meditation, Music & Mantra Chanting.**

Regular practice of meditation daily over 30-45 minutes can enhance your cognition , reduce thoughts, desires & perversions. It can control ego, bad attitude, reduce greed & anger, which are the root causes of our miseries. Meditation can help reduce stress, calm our mind, ease symptoms of depression and anxiety, and regulate negative thinking. Meditation is a great boon, a way of connection to Higher being & cosmic energy that connect us all together.

If you have an underlying health condition, make sure to have enough extra storage to medications that you are currently using.<sup>[9]</sup> Continue with medications for your chronic disorders without fail under guidance of your doctors.

Music is a type of meditation and it heals the soul. . Music therapy employs music to help people cope with physical or emotional needs, and it's actually been found to lessen symptoms in people with mood problems, such as anxiety and depression, and can lift self-esteem.<sup>[10]</sup> Chanting a mantra with mindfulness can go a long way in healing.

### **N's: Nurture the nature, new skill development, Non-violence**

We must nurture the nature at any cost. Nature has a solution for almost everything. Researchers have found that as little as 10 minutes spent with serene nature can

help one feel happier and lessen the effects of both physical and mental stress.<sup>[11]</sup>

Corona pandemic & other natural calamities like earthquakes, tornado have proven the supremacy of nature over mankind & these calamities are simply outcomes of imbalance in nature. Nature is warning us through pandemics, greenhouse effect etc.

COVID-19 has given plenty of idle time to all. It is advisable to be patient and effectively utilize this time for creativity, hobbies or for developing a new skill.

√ Pursuing Hobbies like reading, singing, dancing, drawing, tree plantation, craft and art work, etc.

√ Learning new skills like cooking, appearing for online exams, sports ,reading inspirational books, studying online courses, Learning new language, developing a new creative hobby etc.

√ Extensive reading in areas of interest, carrying out research, writing articles & Blogs

Practice non-violence both physically & mentally. Be impeccable with your words so as not to hurt or offend anybody. Non violence is the fundamental key of all religions.

### **O's: Optimistic outlook**

Choose to focus on the positive things in your life, instead of dwelling on how bad you feel. Optimistic outlook is very important to live a balanced life.

Maintain a sense of hope, work to accept changes as they occur and try to keep problems in perspective.

Optimism, in the COVID-19 context, will operate through enhancing one's efforts to directly improve coping, and building a positive mood.<sup>[12]</sup>

### **P's: Prayer, Patience, Preserve Nature, Plant a Tree & Pollution avoidance**

The role of heartfelt prayer in reducing stress cannot be overemphasized such that studies have proven that prayer plays a significant role which is almost like meditation and other mind-body techniques in reducing stress. It increases parasympathetic output & reduces pulse, blood pressure & respiration. This is a wonderful time to develop a stronger relationship with God by concentrating on personal religious activities. It is very important to preserve our nature, to promote & plant more trees & avoidance of air, water and food pollution to create healthy World!

### **Q's: Quarantine**

Quarantine is defined as the separation of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease, thereby



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reducing the risk of infecting others.<sup>[13]</sup> Quarantine helps to limit the spread of communicable diseases like COVID-19.

One needs quarantine when one is experiencing Covid-like symptoms, or is in close contact/exposed to Covid positive patient (for >15 mins & <6 feet of physical contact). Contact your primary care physician & begin a 14 days quarantine.

### **R's: Responsibility**

Understanding and acting upon our social responsibility in this difficult time faced by nation is important. Firstly, we have to exhibit covid appropriate behavior to control spread of the virus. Further, there are poor and needy people, who work on daily wages and some are homeless and food deprived. We have to help them... Following is illustrative list of activities in which we can engage ourselves.

1. Volunteer or give financial contribution to various funds created by Government of India which will be utilized to fight against COVID-19. You can also donate your time, skills and energy.
2. Guiding Companies / Organizations as to how they can volunteer or contribute to the Government of India to fight against COVID-19.
3. Avoiding wastage of food. Giving food to poor, hungry and needy people.
4. Feeding the Animals and Birds.
5. Spreading social awareness about COVID-19.
6. While engaging into any of the above activities, care must be taken that he /she is not breaking any of the norms / guidelines prescribed by Government for COVID-19 or not infringing the Lock-down rules.
7. Be responsible & avoid social gatherings, parties. Explore work from home opportunity, stay home when sick & limit visitors.

### **S's: Spirituality, Serenity, Self-Dependence, Steam Inhalation, Sanitization & Save Water**

If you draw strength from a belief system, it can bring you comfort during difficult times. Prayers, Spiritual reading, devotion, austerities, Yogic practices & meditation are very helpful spiritual tools. They bring profound serenity.

Sanitization is a preventive and strategic method to contain the spread of SARS-CoV2. One should take standard measures of sanitization of hands, surfaces & objects. Sanitization works as medicine really.

Steam inhalations are often used for the treatment of the viral infections of the respiratory tract such as common cold or croup.. Steam inhalation helps Lower the

inflammatory process and reduces nasal symptoms such as nasal blocketc.

Get involved into serenity of nature & environment. Self-dependence is very important to boost our confidence level & keep ourselves going! Save and preserve water & please don't waste natural resources.

### **T's: Trust in GOD, Time is the best Healer**

To trust is to believe in the reliability, truth, ability or strength of something. So, when it comes to trusting God that means believing in His ability, His Word, and His strength. Trusting God is living a life of belief in and obedience to God even when it's difficult.<sup>[14]</sup> Remember Time is the best healer. This shall pass too, & we will get through this difficult time!

### **U's: Unleash Your Potentials**

- ✓ The decision to change and grow is a powerful tool that can help you move forward. Make a decision that you will start to pursue growth.
- ✓ Make a list of your potential strengths & weaknesses & try hard to work on them to be a better version of your own self
- ✓ Writing short- & long-term goals of your life would slowly help in unleashing your potential. You must visualize each of those goals as already achieved at least for 10 minutes every day in the morning. Creative visualization is a powerful technique to fulfill your goals. Write down goals on a vision board & frequently reaffirm.
- ✓ Set your own benchmark. Be proud of yourself if you're making progress.

### **V's: Vaccination, Vegetarian Diet, No Vices (No Smoking-No Alcohol)**

Vaccination is a must. Demystify all rumors and promote this best and powerful tool to combat Covid effectively. Vaccines train our immune system to recognize the targeted virus and create antibodies to fight off the disease without getting the disease itself. People who have already been infected with SARS-CoV-2 should still get vaccinated unless told otherwise by their health care provider.<sup>[15]</sup> Getting vaccinated may also protect people around you, because if you are protected from getting infected from disease, you are less likely to infect someone else.

Smoking, drinking, or using drugs may offer stress relief in the short-term, but after their effects wear off, you may find yourself feeling more stressed than before. Avoid anything that might seem to be an addictive trigger for you, including substances, gambling, etc. Go veggies & Go green!

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## W's: Win. We will win over Corona. Remember

With adequate vaccination, proper methods of using masks, sanitization protocols, physical distancing and hygiene etiquettes we can and we will surely win over the corona.

We have to empower the citizens with the right information and training them to take right precautions as per the advisories being issued by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

## X's: X don't harm any creature, X-factor to Win Corona is Immunity

Keeping your immune system healthy year-round is the key to prevent diseases.<sup>[16]</sup> Making healthy lifestyle choices and stress free pleasant attitude are the most important ways to bolster your immunity. In addition, research has shown that supplementing with certain vitamins, minerals, herbs, and other substances can help improve our immune response and protect against illness.<sup>[17]</sup> Please do not harm any animals or birds on the earth..

## Y's: You are not alone. Don't give up. You matter.

Millions of us are experiencing during the current pandemic is loneliness. No one is exempt from feeling lonely at times. All of us, at some point or the other, will feel isolated from our loved ones. By caring for each other, checking in on people who are more isolated, or even volunteering for a helpline, we can help prevent a loneliness epidemic.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Z's: Zeal, Zest, Zen Meditation

'Zeal' & 'Zest' mean enthusiasm which is important to achieve success in life & progress forward.

Zen meditation, also known as Zazen, is a meditation technique rooted in Buddhist psychology. The goal of Zen meditation is to regulate attention.<sup>[19]</sup> Zen meditation is similar to mindfulness in that it's about focusing on the presence of mind.

Practice mindfulness. It helps in alleviating fear, anxiety & finding your peaceful self & calm. Research clearly shows meditation has a wide range of physical, cognitive, social, spiritual, and emotional health benefits.<sup>[20]</sup> Meditation can be a great stress reliever. If you cannot go outside, go inside within yourselves, meditate & try to find your true real inner self. Search your ownself within yourself.

So let us spread the correct knowledge. Let us exhibit Appropriate Behavior against Covid. Let us share, care, love, live, sing, dance, read, help, donate, pray, chant and meditate. Let this ABCD enlighten all fellowmen showing the path ahead in these difficult times.

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