EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

For Health Providers, First Responders and Those on the Front Lines

TAKING CARE OF YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH & WELLBEING DURING COVID-19

MU Extension
University of Missouri

TAKING CARE OF YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The University of Missouri Community Health Engagement and Outreach, in partnership with the Center for Excellence in First Responder Education, would like to share research-backed strategies to help build resilience during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Unfamiliar and Unexpected Conditions

Response to COVID-19 has caused a disruption of our usual roles and routines, and adjustment to new work flows and responsibilities. Limited understanding of the virus comes with day-to-day uncertainty and concern for the health of individuals, families, and communities. Health care and frontline workers responding to COVID-19 will be under increased stress and uncertainties related to the virus can be harmful to a front line workers' mental health.

Disaster response is a challenging yet rewarding career. Health care workers and first responders experience stress and burnout under normal circumstances. The lifestyle and experiences associated with the profession increase risk for stress, second victim syndrome, limited exercise, perceived limited control, sleep deprivation, irregular and poor eating habits, and poor work-life balance. Developing strategies to build resilience and reduce stress can help improve the overall health and wellbeing of health care workers.

Managing Stress and Maintaining Resilience

The level of uncertainty from coronavirus is overwhelming and challenging across the country. Health care and frontline workers are working hard to make sure the public gets the services and care they need, while adjusting their standard operating procedures to face the evolving pandemic. The nature of the COVID-19 means working with unknown factors and circumstances that may increase anxiety, stress, and fear of the unknown. We may not be able to control what happens in the coming months, but we may be able to control our response by focusing on the things within control and what is useful.

Experiencing some level of stress is normal and appropriate. Pushing through stress may reduce performance and resilience. In some cases, when stress is perceived as a positive, and is managed well, it can result in better health, improved emotional wellbeing and increased productivity. When the stress response is active for long periods of time, it may have long-term health implications.

Managing Stress and Maintaining Resilience (cont.)

Self-awareness of our own signs of physical or psychological stress, our body's stress response, and what action is needed to limit its impact are critical to stress management. Some signs of psychological stress include sadness, grief, frustration, depression, and guilt. Some signs of physical stress may include headaches, fatigue, and aches and pains.

Practicing incremental mindfulness may help to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Brief formal practices during downtime or to re-center with mindful deep breaths can yield short-term benefits at work. Long-term benefits of mindfulness are seen when engaged in daily practice for at least ten minutes.

Making self-care a priority can create a space in your day for stress reduction strategies. Building resilience includes may require consideration for how the day is structured. Build kindness and self-compassion into your routine by reframing perceptions of failure into opportunities to learn, grow and improve. Monitor negative self-talk by responding to your inner critic with kindness. Be curious and willing to fail.

The more you know about coronavirus, the more you can be proactive and prepared. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization, Johns Hopkins, and American Public Health Association are great resources of up-to-date and factual information regarding COVID-19. Staying informed on the situation from trusted sources may help to improve stress response. Relying on credible sources can diminish panic and stress that misinformation may produce.

Find opportunities for warm, genuine connection through strong relationships and empathetic interactions. Communicate with colleagues and provide support to one another through optimistic motivation, and problem solving. Stay connected to loved ones as the anchor of support outside work. Finally, remind yourself that despite the frustrations and challenges, that you are fulfilling a noble calling by taking care of those most in need while recognizing your colleagues the same.

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

COVID-19 GENERAL INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): COVID-19 Information

MO DHSS 24-hour hotline for citizens and health providers regarding COVID-19 **1-877-435-8411**

Missouri Department of Mental Health: COVID-19 Information

EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

American Psychological Association: Pandemics General Resources

CDC: Do You Get Enough Sleep

CDC, NIOSH: Emergency Response Resources - Traumatic Incident Stress

CDC: Emergency Responders: Tips for Taking Care of Yourself

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress: Sustaining the Well-Being of Healthcare Personnel During Coronavirus and Other Infectious Disease Outbreaks

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress: Psychological Effects of Quarantine During Infectious Disease Outbreaks - What Healthcare Providers Need to Know

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress: Sustaining the Psychological Well-Being of Caregivers While Caring for Disaster Victims

Minnesota Department of Health: COVID-19 Responder Self-Triage

Minnesota Department of Health: COVID-19 and Healthcare Responder Stress

Minnesota Department of Health: Online Video Training-Self Care and Applying Psychological First Aid COVID-19 Healthcare Responders

Modern Nurse: Mindful Movement May Help Lower Stress, Anxiety

MU Extension: Relevate - Elevate Your Relationship

MU School of Medicine: Take a Deep Breath and Lower Your Blood Pressure

SAMHSA: A Guide to Managing Stress in Crisis Response Professions 2

SAMHSA: Coping with Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks

SAMHSA: Helping Staff Manage Stress When Returning to Work - Tips for Supervisors of Disaster Responders

SAMHSA: Preventing and Managing Stress - Tips for Disaster Responders

SAMHSA: Returning to Work - Tips for Disaster Responders

SAMHSA: Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health During an Infectious Disease Outbreak

SAMHSA: Understanding Compassion Fatigue - Tips for First Responders

Shine & Mental Health America: Care for Your Coronavirus Anxiety

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs National Center for PTSD: Managing Healthcare Workers' Stress Associated with the COVID-19 Virus Outbreak

World Health Organization (WHO): Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak

Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence: Mood Meter App and website

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

SAMHSA: Disaster Distress Helpline **1-800-985-5990** or text **TalkWithUs to 66746**

National Suicide Hotline **1-800-273-8255**, Lifeline Crisis Chat

MO Department of Mental Health: Access Crisis Intervention (ACI) Behavioral Health Crisis

HotlineSAMHSA: Behavioral Health Treatment Locator Services

MU Health Care: Behavioral Health

MU Psychological Sciences: Telehealth Services for COVID-19 Related Stress

Safe Call Now: Saving the Lives of Those Who Protect Us

National Volunteer Fire Council: Share the Load Program

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