

Well-Being Tips for Healthcare Workers to Reduce Stress and Improve Self-Care During the COVID-19 Outbreak

Feeling anxious and stressed about the Coronavirus is not unusual. As healthcare workers on the front line, it is natural to experience fear concerning the spread of the disease and impact this will have on our lives. Although we may experience stress in response to the current situation, this does not reflect an inability to perform our jobs or that we are weak. Managing our stress during this time is equally as important as maintaining our physical health. Our response to this pandemic is important for the well-being of our residents and ourselves.¹

Tips for *all* healthcare workers:

- **Seek factual information from legitimate sources.** Only read information from sources such as the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the World Health Organization (WHO). Seeking information from credible sources reduces fear and panic.²
- **Avoid excess exposure to media coverage on COVID-19.** Constantly watching news about Coronavirus can worsen feelings of worry. Consider turning off news notifications on your phone and limiting the amount of time you watch news coverage about COVID-19.²
- **Take care of your basic needs.** Eat healthy meals, get good sleep at night, rest between shifts, and engage in physical activity. Physical and mental health are intertwined- ensuring your physical health strengthens your mental health.¹
- **Establish healthy coping mechanisms.** Healthy coping skills are key for getting you through stressful times. Unhealthy coping mechanisms (tobacco, alcohol) should be avoided as these can worsen your mental physical well-being.¹

Tips for facility leadership:

- **Provide quality communication and accurate information updates.** Ensuring factual information is delivered to staff is critical for decreasing anxiety and increasing the staff's confidence in leadership.¹
- **Rotate workers from high-stress to lower-stress functions.** Partner less experienced workers with more experienced workers to provide support, monitor stress, and reinforce safety procedures.¹
- **Provide staff access to mental health resources.**¹ [Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers](#)
[National Alliance on Mental Illness: COVID-19 Information and Resources](#)

Healthy coping strategies:

- **Exercise:** Go for a walk outside, practice yoga
- **Breathing exercises:** [UofM Stress Management: Breathing Exercises for Relaxation](#)
- **Stay in contact with friends and family:** Make calls to family and friends and use social media to stay connected to those who are important to you
- **Create limits for news and social media:** Constant updates on Coronavirus can amplify feelings of stress and anxiety. Remain informed but consider setting limits to the amount of time you spend reading about coronavirus.
- **Meditation:** Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down, close your eyes, breathe normally, clear your mind and focus on your breathing. If your mind wanders, return to breath. Remain still for 2-3 minutes.
- **Focus on things you can control:** Practice good infection control procedures and follow proper hand hygiene. Focus on the difference you can make at work.
- **Find support in your peers and be a positive support to others:** Creating positivity in your workplace can decrease feelings of overwhelming stress. Discuss all of the good things you are doing for your residents and ways to keep improving your current situation and the situation you are creating for your residents.
- **Do things that you enjoy outside of work, such as reading or listening to music**
- **Practice self-compassion:** Keep a journal of your feelings, take a "self-compassion" break when you are feeling stressed- even a few minutes can make a big difference!³

¹ World Health Organization (2020) https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2

² Mental Health Europe (2020) <https://www.mhe-sme.org/covid-19/>

³ Thrive Global (2020) <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/strategies-to-manage-coronavirus-stress-for-healthcare-professionals/>