

Maintaining Your Mental Well-Being If You Are A Health Care Worker During The COVID-19 Pandemic

April 17, 2020 by Lynn MacDonald

Many people are experiencing feelings of anxiety, distress, and concern about COVID-19, and the health care workers on the front lines of this pandemic may be experiencing even more stress, struggling to maintain your mental well-being while doing your job.

It has never been more important for you to do what you can to care for your mental well-being while doing your best to help people sickened during this pandemic. Here is some advice you may want to consider.

Stress is OK. It is normal to feel overwhelmed or stressed by COVID-19 and its implications. It is also important to remember that experiencing things like anxiety and worry and their symptoms are normal responses to these unprecedented circumstances. They are not a sign of weakness.

It is OK to not be OK with this. As mentioned above, these are unprecedented times. Allow yourself to feel and openly express that you are not OK with what is happening. This is a natural response. It is important to talk to colleagues about your worries.

Keep things in perspective. Remember that you are doing your best to help as many people as you can. However, you are only one person. We will get through this pandemic because countless individuals from scientists to nurses and doctors to all of our support staff are doing everything they can to contain and defeat the virus and treat patients.

Your health matters. You are likely experiencing one of the most mentally, emotionally, and physically demanding periods of time in your work life. If you're not looking after yourself then your health will soon suffer. Try to eat a healthy, balanced diet, maintain an exercise regime, and get sufficient downtime during work hours and sleep between shifts.

Stay connect with those you work with. Now more than ever, it is important to stay and main connection with your colleagues. If working remotely, consider organizing a daily or weekly touch base (virtual huddle) for everyone to check in. If working on a unit/departmental floor, area, etc., plan daily check in times (huddles) where everyone can discuss how they are doing, what is currently going on, what the rest of the day/evening looks like, etc.

Be there for each other – be kind, show care and empathy towards each other. Of course, continue to pay attention to physical distancing as much as you possibly can.

Stay connected with family/friends. Even though you are likely working harder than ever before, do what you can to stay connected with your family and friends. In addition to the stress many of us are feeling during this time of self-isolation and physical distancing, they may also be worried about you. Phone calls and video at a regular times can help you feel like you're maintaining those close ties to others.

Switch off the news. Turning on the news can exacerbate the stress you are already feeling and trigger anxious feelings. While it is important to stay informed, you should consider limiting your media intake if it is upsetting you or those around you.

Don't neglect past problems. If you have experienced mental health issues in the past, remember the things you can do to prepare should those issues return. Acknowledge any feelings of distress, activate your support network at home and in work, and seek professional support if you're having difficulties.

Call your Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP). If you are struggling with anxiety and worry due to the pandemic, caring counsellors can help give you the support you need.

Never be ashamed or afraid to admit that there is, or could be, an issue and take steps to get the help and support that you require. Your mental well-being is of paramount importance, especially in these difficult times, and it is important that you dedicate time to managing it.

Access your EFAP 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
at workhealthlife.com or login.lifeworks.com.