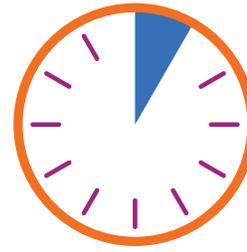




Taking Care of Your Mental Health During COVID-19



5 Minute Safety Talk

We are all feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are barraged with information from many different sources – work, family and friends, schools, news, social media, emails and more. We may be working remotely for the first time, or be working on-site and facing increased risk of exposure to COVID-19. We may have children at home while trying to work, or have loved ones laid off. We may be worrying about getting the food and supplies we need to survive. Some of us may have family or friends who are positive for COVID-19, a significant source of worry and distress.

The seriousness of these issues, along with the gravity of the pandemic, can take a significant toll on our mental health and wellbeing. These increased levels of stress, uncertainty and anxiety can also potentially lead to an increase in substance misuse or substance use disorders, or an increased risk for relapse for those already in treatment or recovery.

Unfortunately, this increased stress can possibly extend for weeks or months, even after the initial crisis begins to subside. During periods of prolonged stress, family violence, substance use and suicide are shown to increase. We don't say this to scare you – but we want you to understand that extremely stressful circumstances can have unexpected, serious effects. We want to support you to avoid these tragic situations.

We understand that everyone is facing different situations at work and home. None of you are alone. Our company wants to help you through these tough times so that we can all have the best possible outcomes. We will be communicating our offerings frequently, but you can always reach out to your supervisor or Human Resources representative for more details.

One of the best ways to prevent mental health issues, substance use and misuse, and reduce risk for relapse is to be able to identify the warning signs early in yourself and others. Some of the common immediate [reactions](#)¹ you or others may be experiencing in relation to the current crisis are:

- [Feeling physically and mentally drained](#)
- [Having difficulty making decisions or staying focused on topics](#)
- [Becoming easily frustrated on a more frequent basis](#)
- [Arguing more with family and friends](#)
- [Feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely or worried](#)
- [Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns](#)

It is not wrong to be having these feelings, but if you are having them frequently, it is a sign you should seek additional help. Remember, the stress and emotional distress you may be feeling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic may continue past the end of the initial crisis, meaning these reactions could take place several weeks or months from now.



There is no shame in asking for help or seeking counseling. Counseling helps with stress and mental health issues, as well as provides support on a variety of practical problems such as money, marriage, family violence, legal issues, and child and elder care concerns. This counseling can often be done through phone calls and video. Online support groups also exist – these are especially important to use for existing [substance use](#)² and [mental health](#)³ issues during this pandemic when face-to-face support is limited or unavailable.

Here are some ideas for self-care that can help reduce stress and anxiety, and that can be done while following guidelines for social distancing:

- [Reaching out to your doctor, physician, or other medical or addiction professional with concerns about your physical or mental wellbeing](#)
- [Going for walks or bike rides](#)
- [Meditating](#)
- [Practicing yoga](#)
- [Exercising at home or outside](#)
- [Creating a virtual social support community using Zoom or FaceTime, and calling or emailing family and friends](#)
- [Engaging in hobbies you enjoy \(gardening, reading, cooking, listening to music, catching up on shows, etc.\)](#)
- [Prioritizing good sleep and healthy eating](#)

Not everyone will follow the same ideas for self-care. Everyone's situation is different, and everyone's coping methods are different as well. It is ok to take care of you or your family's mental and physical health in a variety of ways.

We are going through unusual circumstances – it is normal to find this challenging, and to experience a wide range of emotions as we adjust.

Don't let the stress overwhelm you, and reach out if you need help. We are all in this together, so let's look out for each other and help one another through it.



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Don't forget to share the specific resources your organization provides



Here is a list of company and community resources:

- [Fill in EAP information here](#)

- [Fill in benefit or hotline information here](#)

- [Fill in other local information here](#)

¹ <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/recovering-emotionally.html>

² https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/nation_prevention_week/npw-2017-organizations-places-assistance.pdf

³ <https://www.nami.org/getattachment/About-NAMI/NAMI-News/2020/NAMI-Updates-on-the-Coronavirus/COVID-19-Updated-Guide-1.pdf>



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