

# TIPS FOR MANAGING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

Do you feel hopeless or lack initiative? Are you sleeping less and drinking more? Maybe you feel anxious or are worried about the health of your family or your employees' families. Those are just a few of the symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression that might manifest during a prolonged or unexpected crisis like COVID-19. And, these feelings don't discriminate. Your family, friends, neighbors, and employees are likely struggling with the same pressures.

## RECOGNIZE THE SYMPTOMS



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Worry about a highly contagious disease and financial uncertainties can be overwhelming and create a variety of emotional responses. Learning to recognize the symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression is the first step to managing them. Common responses include:

- Sadness, confusion, irritability, anger, uneasiness, and even suicidal thoughts
- Reduced concentration, efficiency, and productivity
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Tension (headaches, teeth grinding, etc.)
- Body pain (headaches, muscle spasms, etc.)

- Reduced energy (tiredness, weakness, fatigue, etc.)
- Sleeping problems (nightmares, insomnia, etc.)
- Interpersonal problems (lies, defensiveness, etc.)

## MANAGE YOUR RESPONSE



Identify and acknowledging them allows you to take the first steps toward managing them. There are a number of ways you can minimize or manage feelings of stress and anxiety:

- Meditate
- Play with a pet
- Read a book or watch your favorite movie or TV show
- Take a walk, jog, or bike ride
- Call a loved one or someone who might be isolated and would like attention
- Take an online class
- Learn a new language
- Host a virtual gathering
- Clean or organize your home or office
- Practice gratitude

And, most importantly, **you should limit or avoid exposure to "too much news."**

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policies, as well as state or federal government options that might be available to them. (See the Bibliography linked in **Other Resources** below for articles that may be of assistance.)

As an employer, you may have arrangements for an EAP (employee assistance program). Make sure your employees are familiar with its benefits and how they can be accessed.

The **Disaster Distress Helpline** provides immediate crisis counseling to people impacted by the coronavirus. **Call 1-800-985-5990** to connect with a free, confidential, and multilingual crisis support service. You can also **text “TalkWithUs” to 66746** to reach a licensed mental health consultant.

## EVERYONE RESPONDS DIFFERENTLY



Some people might have a harder time responding to the stresses of COVID-19:

- Older people and those with chronic diseases who may be at higher risk for severe illness from the virus
- Children and teens
- People who struggle with alcohol, drugs, or existing mental health issues
- Those who are unemployed, isolated, or elderly
- People on the front lines, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, caretakers, and other essential workers, such as truck drivers and delivery personnel

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## LOOKING OUT FOR OTHERS



Be mindful that stress and anxiety can be debilitating. Calls to mental health and crisis hotlines are up 200-300 percent since the beginning of the COVID -19 crisis.

If you notice that your symptoms are difficult to manage, don't hesitate to seek professional help. And, if you see employees or colleagues who show signs of stress or anxiety, be sure they are aware of their health and any benefits available to them. Advise them of your sick leave

## OTHER RESOURCES



A wide range of resources, including the [CDC website on Stress and Coping](#) and [Beyond Blue](#) (an Australian site) are included in the bibliography you can link to [here](#). Articles on helping yourself and your employees included and are updated regularly.