

TOOL 9: Tips for Staff Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Health care personnel (HCP) are all affected by this incident. HCP are trained to ignore their own emotions, thoughts and needs and instead, focus on the patient and their needs. However, studies show the importance of provider self-care, particularly during times of undue stress and uncertainty. Ignoring their needs can lead to impatience, depression and despair, negatively affecting those s/he is responsible for. Just as need to keep an eye on their charges, so must they keep an eye on their own mental wellbeing.

Take a moment to review the list below and gauge the level of stress that may be weighing on you and your staff. There is help available to those who are struggling – but the first and most important step is awareness.

What can stress look like?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability, feeling numb or detached; • Feeling overwhelmed or maybe hopeless; • Lack of feeling or empathy or impersonal response toward one’s patients; or
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-esteem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling a lack of personal achievement, general worsening of self-confidence.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscle tension, headaches, stomach pain, racing heart and sweating; • Low energy or fatigue; or • Restless, on edge or agitated.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Behavioral: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing your routine or engaging in self-destructive coping mechanisms; • Eating poorly and poor sleep (too much or not enough); or • Using substances.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing low performance of job tasks and responsibilities; • Feeling low job morale; or • Expressing cynicism or a negative attitude toward one’s patients.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cognitive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing confusion, diminished concentration and difficulty with decision-making/easily distracted; or • Experiencing trauma imagery – seeing events over-and-over again.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spiritual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning the meaning of life or lacking self-satisfaction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Interpersonal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically withdrawing or becoming emotionally unavailable to co-workers or family; • Strained personal relationships or marriages.
What CAN you do?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Follow a healthy lifestyle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat healthy foods and exercise regularly. • Practice good sleep hygiene and make time for rest and relaxation on a regular basis. • Avoid substance use.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Make wellness part of your everyday life. <i>Prioritize emotional health to improve resilience and manage stress:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise, spend time with yourself, or do mindfulness exercises. • Deep breathing can alleviate feelings of stress and regulate your body. • Do meditation or yoga.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Schedule annual checkups.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Connect with friends and family.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with a supportive colleague or mentor to think through helpful strategies for managing stress at work. • Stay in touch with family and friends through telephone calls, Face Time, Zoom, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Seek support from a support group or mental health professional. These are unprecedented times. The responses listed above are normal and can be expected. They may be temporary, or they may last for a period of time. Stress can result in anxiety, depression or trauma if the responses interfere with functioning and last for a long time. Seek mental health treatment to develop effective coping strategies.</p> <p><i>Mental health treatment is effective and it's for everyone regardless of age, profession or background.</i></p>

If you or someone you love has suicidal thoughts, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A lifeline chat is also available at: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.