

Essential Employees & COVID-19

WHAT PEOPLE ON THE FRONT LINES NEED TO KNOW

People working in long-term care facilities, the check-out lane at a local store, on the production line in factories, the doctor's office, first responders, firefighters, and other essential employees all have one thing in common; stress related to COVID19.

And as this crisis continues to unfold, understanding the signs and negative impact of stress is important. Everyone on the front lines needs to understand that every day people are struggling and need support.

Stress affects **EVERYBODY** in four domains. What you see, hear, or experience that is **different from your previous level of functioning** could be:

- **Thinking Skills**– clouded thinking or mental slowness, confusion, indecisiveness, negative thinking, ruminations, increase in errors at work.
- **Emotional** – anxiety, worry, fears, nervousness, anger, helplessness, self-doubt, blaming others
- **Physical** – headaches, neck/back/jaw pain, digestive problems, general aches and pains
- **Behavioral** – irritability, pressured speech, appetite changes, low frustration tolerance, anger, crying spells, social isolation, calling in sick to work, being late to work, decrease in work performance

Remember: **EVERYONE** responds differently to stressful situations; some people may have more obvious signs of distress than others.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?:

- Be aware of these common reactions to stress in yourself and others
- Know that you are not alone
- Be aware of how stress typically affects you and appreciate that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. It is not what is wrong with you but rather what is happening to you.
- Try to keep a routine when circumstances allow
- Care for yourself by eating well, exercising, and getting regular rest
- Remind yourself to use your coping strategies that have worked in the past
- Engage in relaxing activities regularly; even 15 mins per day of guided meditation, yoga, crossword puzzles, music, lite reading, warm bath, etc. can be helpful
- Be informed but unplug from the news, social media, and constant reminders of the situation
- Share your thoughts and feelings with those who are supportive and helpful
- Contact your EAP if your employer has one
- Access resources in your community such as support groups or professional services

In addition, crisis hot lines or warm lines are available:

- Foundation 2 Crisis Line at 319-362-2174
- Abbe Health Warm Line at 844-775-WARM (9276)
- Your Life Iowa at 855-581-8111 (talk) or 8550-895-8398 (text) <https://yourlifeiowa.org/> for information or chat

Other resources include:

- Visit MakeItOK.org/iowa to learn more about mental health resources for businesses.
- Check out NAMI's [COVID-19 Information & Resources](http://www.nami.org) at www.nami.org
- National Institute on Mental Health - www.nimh.nih.gov
- Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Distress – www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov
- Cononavirus.gov
- Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration Helpline – 800-985-5990 or TalkWithUs text to 66746
- Care.SilverCloudHealth.com
- www.calm.org