

General Frontline Workforce (Non Healthcare) and COVID-19

It is important to remind yourself:

- It is not selfish to take breaks.
- The needs of survivors are not more important than your own needs and well-being.
- Working all of the time does not mean you will make your best contribution.
- There are other people who can help in the response.

Responding to disasters can be both rewarding and stressful. Knowing that you have stress and coping with it as you respond will help you stay well, and this will allow you to keep helping those who are affected.

Anxious or worried?

Increased anxiety is common as we navigate COVID-19 and its broad consequences. Patient care and uncertainty about health outcomes, finances, childcare, travel and scheduled events are highly stressful. Action is one of the best treatments for anxiety. Share your concerns and problem solve with colleagues, clinical team members, family and friends to plan coping steps.

Pace yourself

Monitor yourself for disrupted sleep, excessive fatigue, irritability, poor focus and marked anxiety. If we run on empty, we can't care for our patients, families or communities. Our work is a marathon, not a race.

Breathe

Try mindful breathing several times a day. Take a moment for low and slow breaths before getting out of the car, when you enter your work area, and prior to entering a patient room or a procedure. Breathing helps us to calm down and improves our concentration.

Maintain good health habits

As stress and demands increase, health habits often take a hit. Bring your meals to work to maximize healthy eating, limit alcohol and THC use, try to get enough sleep, prioritize aerobic exercise and get some sunlight.

Exercise, exercise, exercise

Aerobic exercise is vital for stress reduction. Consider walking, biking, running and hiking, throwing a Frisbee or ball as well as exercise and yoga videos. For home exercise and yoga videos see: [Fitness Blender](#) and [Yoga with Adriene](#). A short aerobic walk or workout is better than nothing.

Connect, connect and connect again

Reach out to family, friends, colleagues and your favorite community groups for social contact. Call, Facetime, Zoom, Skype or try Google Hangouts to reduce your isolation.

Meaningful and fun connection, emotional support and healthy problem solving are vital to your health and well-being. Consider joining another family or friend for a meal by social media to reduce isolation for everyone.

Take breaks at work and at home

Work with your team to take mini breaks. Even a 10-minute walk during your shift is calming and improves vital energy and focus. Plan down time at home. Exercise, a good book, movie, or podcast, games with your family, and mindfulness techniques help us refuel physically and emotionally.

Promote teamwork

If you have children or relatives who need care, let your team leadership know ASAP. Ask if your health system has developed plans to assist with family responsibilities.

Maintain structure at home

If you or your children are working from home, establish a consistent workspace to help with focus and productivity. Plan breaks as well.

Flexibility is essential

Increased demand for care, social distancing and other unique stressors will test our flexibility and adaptability. We will all have to practice outside of the box—especially when things go wrong and are chaotic. It's OK. Ask for support, evaluate, modify and move forward.

Get support from team members: Develop a Buddy System

In a buddy system, two responders partner together to support each other, and monitor each other's stress, workload, and safety.

- Get to know each other. Talk about background, interests, hobbies, and family. Identify each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- Keep an eye on each other. Try to work in the same location if you can.
- Set up times to check-in with each other. Listen carefully and share experiences and feelings. Acknowledge tough situations and recognize accomplishments, even small ones.
- Offer to help with basic needs such as sharing supplies and transportation.
- Monitor each other's workloads. Encourage each other to take breaks. Share opportunities for stress relief (rest, routine sleep, exercise, and deep breathing).
- Communicate your buddy's basic needs and limits to leadership – make your buddy feel "safe" to speak up.