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Self-care advice for health-care providers during COVID-19

Concrete strategies to help manage stress.

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Health-care providers and other hospital and clinic staff are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many providers are balancing competing demands, caring for our patients, our families and ourselves. Here are concrete strategies to help manage stress during this challenging time.

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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 (<https://www.fitnessblender.com/>) and Yoga with Adriene (<https://yogawithadriene.com/>).

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.

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