



Combating Stress for Healthcare Workers during Covid-19 Outbreak

The extreme stress, uncertainty, and often difficult medical nature of global infectious disease outbreaks, such as COVID-19, require special attention to the needs of healthcare workers. Taking care of yourself and encouraging others to practice self-care sustains the ability to care for those in need.

Challenges for Healthcare Workers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks

- **Surge in care demands:-** Many more people present for care, while increased healthcare workers may be sick or caring for family.
- **Ongoing risk of infection:-** Increased risk of contracting dreaded illness and passing it along to family, friends, and others at work.
- **Equipment challenges:-** Equipment can be unfamiliar, uncomfortable, limit mobility and communication, and be of uncertain benefit; shortages occur as a result of increased, and sometimes unnecessary, use.
- **Long working hours.**
- **Separation from family.**
- **Psychological stress in the outbreak settings:-** Helping those in need can be rewarding, but also difficult as workers may experience fear, grief, frustration, guilt, insomnia, and exhaustion.

Strategies for Improving Healthcare Worker's Well-Being

- **Meet Basic Needs:-** Be sure to eat, drink and sleep regularly. Becoming biologically deprived puts you at risk and may also compromise your ability to care for patients.
- **Take Breaks:-** Give yourself a rest from tending to patients. Whenever possible, allow yourself to do something unrelated to work that you find comforting, fun or relaxing. Taking a walk, listening to music, reading a book, or talking with a friend can help. Some people may feel guilty if they are not working full-time or are taking time to enjoy themselves when so many others are suffering.

Recognize that taking appropriate rest leads to proper care of patients after your break.

- **Connect with Colleagues:-** Talk to your colleagues and receive support from one another. Infectious outbreaks can isolate people in fear and anxiety. Share your story and listen to others'.
- **Communicate Constructively:-** Communicate with colleagues clearly and in an optimistic manner. Identify mistakes or deficiencies in a constructive manner and correct them. Complement each other—compliments can be powerful motivators and stress moderators. Share your frustrations and your solutions. Providing regular feedback is essential.
- **Contact Family:-** Contact your loved ones, if possible. They are an anchor of support outside the healthcare system. Sharing and staying connected may help them better support you.
- **Respect Differences:-** Some people need to talk while others need to be alone. Recognize and respect these differences in yourself, your patients and your colleagues.
- **Stay Updated:-** Rely on trusted sources of information. Participate in meetings to stay informed of the situation, plans and events.
- **Limit Media Exposure:-** Information overload and confusing messages will increase your stress and may reduce your effectiveness and overall wellbeing.
- **Self Check-Ins:-** Monitor yourself over time for any symptoms of depression or stress disorder: prolonged sadness, difficulty sleeping, intrusive memories, hopelessness. Talk to a peer, senior, or seek professional help if needed.
- **Have Hope:-** Remember that this will pass off one day and vast majority of us will do well.
- **Honor Your Service:-** Remind yourself that despite obstacles or frustrations, you are fulfilling a noble calling—taking care of those most in need. Recognize your colleagues—either formally or informally—for their service.