



**Office of
Mental Health**

Employee Wellness during COVID-19

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Reacting to and coping with disaster

Everyone who experiences a disaster is affected in some way

- Stress and anxiety are normal reactions to abnormal situations.
- After an initial stress response, most people will cope effectively and grow stronger.

Reacting to and coping with disaster

It is important to remember that we may experience a wide range of emotions when faced with a crisis or disaster

- Identify your emotions and allow yourself to experience them without judgement.
- If you are struggling, it may be helpful to reach out for more help. Use EAP as a resource.

Maintaining well-being

Maintain a regular schedule

- Shower
- Get dressed
- Eat at mealtimes

Caring for a loved one

- Expect and accept interruptions without judgement.
- Recognize that your workday may be unconventional.

Maintaining well-being

Take scheduled breaks / set aside time during your workday to engage in an enjoyable activity.

- Chair yoga
- Deep breathing exercises
- Walking
- Calling a colleague/friend/family member

Maintaining well-being

Healthy eating / sleeping

- Prepare healthy meals and snacks the night before so you do not fall into unhealthy habits during times of stress.
- Maintain a regular schedule for sleep.
- Engage in meditation before bed to help decompress from added stress during times of uncertainty.

Media limits

- Limit checking media related to COVID-19 to one time per day, and only look at areas of concern for you (town you or family live or work in).

Maintaining well-being

Practice gratitude

- Each day, compose a short list of things you are grateful for. This seemingly benign task gets our minds off of the stress and anxiety, even if for just a few minutes.
- Consider making a positivity mural in a place that is highly visible to your family or co-workers.
 - Other family members or staff can write something on the mural each day that they are grateful for. Seeing what others write can help remind us of things we are grateful for in our lives, but have possibly overlooked during these times of stress.

Maintaining well-being

Be kind to yourself and others

- Do not overwhelm yourself. We may not be capable of maintaining balance in every area of our life during these times.
- Be kind to others. People deal with stress in different ways. Do not take others' behavior or ways of managing personally.

Reacting to and coping with disaster

A sense of community helps decrease stress

- Continue communicating with loved ones and friends, despite having to socially distance.
- Use online platforms, if possible, to maintain contact with others.
- Call friends and loved ones on a regular basis to check-in.
 - Remember to talk about things other than the current crisis. This will help to maintain some sense of normalcy.

Reacting to and coping with disaster

It may be difficult to manage our own emotions during this time when we are also trying to manage the emotions of children or other loved ones.

- Maintain open communication.
- Create a safe space for others to process how they are feeling.
- Expect and allow for a difference of experience.
- Remember not everyone experiences the same emotion in the same way (e.g. you may experience anxiety as an inability to focus, whereas a child may experience it as a stomach ache).

Considerations for Managers

Keep staff informed

- Set a regular meeting time for updates. Even if there is no new information, keep your regularly scheduled time and let staff know there are no current updates.

Check in regularly

- Reach out to staff to ensure they are engaging in self-care.
- Thank your staff. Your words are important.

Considerations for Managers

Dealing with grief

- Staff may be dealing with grief in many different aspects of their lives (loss of a loved one, loss of connection)
- Be mindful that productivity may be affected in times of stress
- Be supportive and model that it is okay to grieve

Touch base with other leadership staff

- You cannot offer support to your staff if you do not have a support network

Coping resources

- NYS Emotional Support Helpline: **1-844-863-9314**
 - 7 days per week, 8am-10pm
- OMH Commissioner Dr. Ann Sullivan on managing anxiety during COVID-19
 - <https://youtu.be/1zh6gaASMeQ>