Staff Wellbeing Resources During COVID-19 Crisis

KAMC-WR

During stressful situations such as the current coronavirus crisis, people might feel anxious, overwhelmed or sad. The chance of experiencing these negative emotions during the current crisis is higher among staff who work at hospitals, especially in the front lines (It is okay not to be okay).

There are many factors contributing to experience these negative emotions during COVID-19 pandemic, such as:

- Dealing with multiple uncertainties (such as the chance of getting infection, availability of vaccine or treatment, how long the crisis will last, and it is magnitude).
- Fear of infection (self, family or friends, family or friends who are currently outside the country).
- Isolation (quarantine, home isolation, curfew hours).
- Economic crisis associated with this crisis and its effects at different levels (personal, family, institute, country).

It is very important to address the stress to avoid experiencing negative or serious consequences.

This document provides some practical and helpful tips to maintain individual's mental health during this crisis:

01 Take the necessary precautions and follow the instructions by MOH and your Institute

- Following these instructions will decreases the chance of getting infection or transmitting the infections to family members or others, which will help in decreasing the anxiety level.
- Here are some important information about COVID-19 and very important instructions that you should follow to ensure your safety and your family's safety:



Please see (Appendix A).

02 Keep up to Date



- It is very important to keep up to date with information related to this crisis, but you need to set boundaries with NEWS and social media, as they can be the main source of your stress.
- Allocate specific times during the day not exceeding 1 hr/day to review the updates.
- Obtain the information only from reliable sources such as Saudi Ministry of Health (MOH), and Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

    - Ministry of Health (Twitter Account)
    - Ministry of Health (Official Website)
    - Saudi Press Agency (Twitter Account)
    - Saudi Press Agency (Official Website)
    - World Health Organization (Twitter Account)
    - World Health Organization (Official Website)

03 Social Connection



- Some might think that social distancing or home isolation means **SOCIAL ISOLATION**, which in fact has negative effects on our mental health.
- It is very important to keep connection with family and friends especially during this difficult time.
- Use technology (such as face time, skype, Google Hangouts etc.) to connect with family and friends.
- Try to utilize the increased time spent at home to strengthen your relationship with family members (shared meals, shared activities).

04 Get enough Sleep



- Sleep is very essential for our physical and mental health.
- Try to get enough sleep as sleep deprivation affects your psychological state and mental health.
- Getting good sleep is important also for your memory, immunity, maintaining your weight, and has many health benefits.
- The amount of sleep required depends on the age (make sure to get at least 6-8 hours per day).
- Try to keep regular schedule (going to bed, waking up, meals, work, etc.)
- Avoid reversed sleep pattern (sleeping during the day time and staying up at night).
- Exposure to the sun light will help you to maintain the biological clock to a daytime schedule.
- Below are some tips to help you get efficient sleep:

    - Sleep in a quiet, dark, and comfortable bedroom.
    - Avoid doing routine activities on the bed like watching TV, eating, reading, playing, etc.
    - Maintain a regular sleep routine.
    - Avoid long daytime naps as much as possible.
    - Avoid excess caffeine consumption during the day and avoid caffeinated products 6 hours before bedtime.
    - Avoid heavy meals before bedtime.
    - Exercise regularly, but avoid exercising 3-4 hours before the bedtime.
    - Spend an hour before bedtime doing relaxing activities such as reading.

05 Be Active Physically

- Exercise has multiple benefits not only to physical health, but to mental health as well.
- There is evidence about the benefit of regular exercise on stress, burnout, and mental disorders such as depression and anxiety disorders.
- Try to exercise at least 45 minutes, 3-4 times a week.
- During quarantine, home isolation, or curfew hours try to utilize exercise machines at home (such as Trade mail, Elliptical machine), or do exercise that doesn't require any space or certain equipment as in the GIF pictures below:



Please see (Appendix B).

06 Soothing Activities

- Soothing activities are usually very helpful in reducing stress and anxiety.
- Here are some soothing activities:
    - Take a warm bath/shower before sleep (can help in relaxing the muscles and assisting falling asleep).
    - Light a candle.
    - Listen to soothing sounds (Holy Quran, nature sounds, relaxing music).
    - Watch your favorite TV shows or movies.
    - Spend some time on your favorite hobbies and try to learn new hobbies.

07 Avoid excess Caffeine

- Caffeine is available in coffee, red tea, green tea, energy drinks, caffeinated soda, and chocolate.
- Try to decrease caffeine consumption as Caffeine is a stimulant to the Central Nervous System (CNS) that can increases anxiety and affects the amount and quality of sleep negatively.
- It is advised not to exceed more than 300 mg of caffeine/day (People with anxiety or people who are under stress it is advised not to exceed 150-200 mg/day).



- The link bellow provides information about the amount of caffeine per product and brand:

  Caffeine Content of Drinks

08 Avoid Unhealthy Habits

- Some people smoke, use alcohol or street drugs to self-medicate or cope with their stress, but these habits have many short-term and long-term negative effects on physical and psychological health.
- It is very important to learn how to cope with stress without relying on these unhealthy habits.



09 Breathing Exercises

- When you are stressed or anxious your breathing pattern becomes shallow (Chest Breathing). This kind of breathing is associated with sympathetic nervous system that mediates fight or flight response.
- Abdominal breathing (also called Belly Breathing or Diaphragmatic Breathing) is a deep slow breathing that allows more air to flow inside your lungs and make your diaphragm flat. This kind of breathing can bring you back to the relaxation state by activating the parasympathetic nervous system.
- Practice Abdominal breathing regularly:
  - Find a quiet place away from any distractions.
  - Position: lying down or siting on a chair.
  - Put one of your hands on the chest and the other one on the abdomen.
  - Close your eyes.



  - Inhale through your nose allowing the air to fill in your lung and notice the abdomen moving out as you inhale and then exhale through your mouth and notice the abdomen moving in as you exhale.
  - Patterns: there is no consensus about the number of counts during inhalation and exhalation, but for beginners try counting two slowly for each inhalation and two for each exhalation and keep doing this 3-10 times. Later you can try different patterns for example: breathing in for four counts and out for four to six counts. Also you can hold your breath between inhalation and exhalation, for example: breathing in for five counts, hold for 5-10 counts and then out for 5-10 counts.
- At the beginning, you might not feel immediate results. Keep trying as it is a new skill that requires regular practice.
- It is very helpful to practice it 2-5 minutes every night, even if you are not stressed.
- Below are some helpful videos/recordings on Breathing Exercises:

  - Diaphragmatic Breathing (Video)
  - Diaphragmatic Breathing - Seated or Upright Position (Video)
  - Relaxation (Audio)

10 Mindfulness

- Practicing Mindfulness can lead to positive life changes such as reducing stress and anxiety, increasing the ability to cope with difficult situations, reducing the physical pain, and boosting your immunity.
- Mindfulness means being attentive to your current thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and behaviors using all of your senses. It involves staying at the moment and being free from the past and the future while letting go of any judgement.
- It can be practiced informally at any time and place or formally during seated practices.
- Below are some videos/recordings on mindfulness and mindfulness breathing:



- Mindfulness Just This Breath (Audio)
- Meditation Outside in (Audio)
- Mindfulness Breathing Guided Meditation 10 Minutes (Video)
- Daily Calm | 10 Minute Mindfulness Meditation | Be Present (Video)
- 3-minute Mindful Breathing Meditation (Video)
- Three Minutes Meditation (Video)

11 Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)



- During stress our body undergoes many physiological changes and body sensations including muscle tension.
- Prolonged muscle tension can cause pain in the jaw area, tension headache, and pain in the shoulder or neck muscles.
- Most people are not aware that their muscles are tense when they are stressed. This technique increases the awareness of the muscle tension and allows it to be reduced.
- The technique gives a relaxation state similar to the effect of body massage.
- Find a quiet place away from any distractions.
- While sitting on a chair tense and then release the tension in muscle groups one at a time in a specific order throughout your body. You might start at hands then lower arms and move up to the head and then move down group by group until you reach the toes targeting the whole body.
- At the beginning, you might not feel immediate results. Keep trying as it is a new skill that requires regular practice.
- Below is a recording on PMR:

  Muscle Relax (Audio)

Very Useful Resources to help with coping with COVID-19

1. **Face COVID by Dr. Russ Harris**
   - 2-Minute Guided Meditation to Release Stress (Video)
   - Face COVID by Russ Harris (PDF)

2. **Three Steps to coping with anything (including COVID-19) by Dr. Robert Maunder and Dr. Jon Hunter**
   - Three steps to coping with anything (including COVID-19) (Video)

3. **Relaxation Exercises in Arabic**
   - Journey into Relaxation (Arabic Website)

Self-Assessment Questionnaires

1. General Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)

GAD-7 (General Anxiety Disorder-7) (Website)

2. Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)

PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire-9) (Website)

If you scored <10 in both scales → Review and follow the tips included in the resources.

If you scored ≥ 10 → you are likely to benefit from calling **Staff Wellbeing Hotline.**

World Health Organization

Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



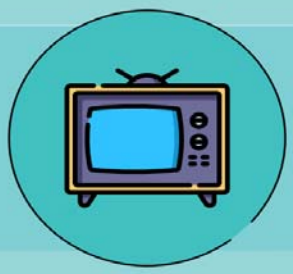


Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.





Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.



World Health Organization

Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated, bedwetting etc.

Respond to your child's reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns and give them extra love and attention.

Children need adults' love and attention during difficult times. Give them extra time and attention.

Remember to listen to your children, speak kindly and reasure them.

If possible, make opportunities for the child to play and relax.





Try and keep children close to their parents and family and avoid separating children and their caregivers to the extent possible. If separation occurs (e.g. hospitalization) ensure regular contact (e.g. via phone) and re-assurance.

Keep to regular routines and schedules as much as possible, or help create new ones in a new environment, including school/learning as well as time for safely playing and relaxing.





Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age.

This also includes providing information about what could happen in a re-assuring way (e.g. a family member and/or the child may start not feeling well and may have to go to the hospital for some time so doctors can help them feel better).

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