

memo

DATE: April 22, 2020
TO: Coordinators and LA Staff
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SUBJECT: Managing Stress during Challenging Times

Finding ways to manage stress in even the best of times can be challenging. This memo will offer some information about stress, how to use stress to advance, and practical tips on managing stress within your role and your organization.

What to know about stress

- Stress affects everyone, you're not alone!
- Not all stress is bad, stress can motivate you.
- Long-term stress can harm your health, disturbing the immune, digestive, cardiovascular, sleep, and reproductive systems.
- Stress is manageable, there are resources and help available.

Our brains are hardwired for safety, so when we become stressed our whole body will react. As we work to process stress, we can begin to discover how to manage it. In this way stress is information and we can use it to make adjustments that help us manage the impact it has on our health.

Tips for staff

- Exercise, regular physical exercise such as walking, yoga, biking, or running.
- Sleep, having a bedtime routine and getting adequate sleep each night.
- Healthy eating, eating balanced healthy meals each day.
- Support, building and maintaining a healthy support system.
 - Family & Friends
 - Physician or Mental Health Provider
 - Workplace Employee Assistance Program
 - Community Support Programs
- Taking time for yourself, allow time to self-calm and refresh.

Staff thrive when we feel safe (building trust), are seen (recognizing worth), heard (feeling validated) and helped (feeling supported). We value reliable information, focused planning, accurate and timely communication, and maintaining a balance.

Tips for teams

- **“How are you”** Build a support community between co-workers, take time to video chat and allow each person to share how they feel.
- **“How can I help”** Encourage staff to reach out and answer in a timely manner.
- **“What do you need to know”** Information calms fear. Be ready to share what you can.
- **“Here’s what we’re doing”** Maintaining an expectation of routine throughout the week can calm fears.
- **“You’re doing a great job”** Providing praise builds a sense of security and worth.

While current situations are temporary, there are things we have learned and can use moving forward. Beginning to plan for “after” provides hope and opens a window into the future. Using tools available helps to build on skills in our toolbox and reduces stress while we navigate change.

Tools for Supporting Staff

- Allowing for autonomy and flexibility to meet customer needs builds trust in staff ability to perform independently.
- Using available resources to streamline processes can support the remote working environment.
- Keeping a list of community resources allows staff to feel prepared to assist with participants’ concerns.
- Keep open lines of communication so staff feel supported during change.

Resources

[Stay Healthy \(www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/genstayhealthy.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/genstayhealthy.pdf), Minnesota WIC Nutrition Education Card.

[Workplace Wellness \(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/workwellness/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/workwellness/index.html), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

[Minnesota COVID-19 Response: Mental Health Support \(https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/get-help/mental-health.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/get-help/mental-health.jsp), Minnesota Mental Health Support.

[COVID-19 | Five Things About Staying Mentally Healthy During the COVID-19 Outbreak \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60kGONUJSRY\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60kGONUJSRY), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

[Shareable Resources \(https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/education-awareness/shareable-resources-on-coping-with-covid-19.shtml\)](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/education-awareness/shareable-resources-on-coping-with-covid-19.shtml), on Coping with COVID-19, National Institute of Mental Health (NIH).

[Self-Care & Time at Home \(https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus#chapter-2437\)](https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus#chapter-2437), Dr. Barbara Stroud presents COVID-19 Tips for Parents, Zero to Three.

MANAGING STRESS

[Self-Care Resources for Frontline WIC Staff \(https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/self-care-resources-3-19-2020.pdf\)](https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/self-care-resources-3-19-2020.pdf), National WIC Association (NWA).

[Taking Care of Your Emotional Health \(https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp\)](https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/selfcare.asp), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

[Stress Effects on the Body \(https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress/effects-endocrine\)](https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress/effects-endocrine), American Psychological Association (APA).