



How Will I Cope? A guide for staff working during ongoing critical events

Introduction

This guide was written to help you understand some of the reactions that you, your colleagues and teams may experience during the prolonged, ongoing situation of COVID 19.

Each of us will already have shared and different experiences both at work and home and we will be working hard to maintain some sense of normality in what is an abnormal situation. Our feelings and thoughts about the situation will be informed by the type of person we are, our past experiences and our work and family circumstances.

Humans have a natural and strong ability to 'survive' and we will, to a great extent, engage these survival instincts during the most challenging days ahead. **Self-care, teamwork and good communication** will enable you to monitor your pace and to make adjustments to your life and routine to optimise your wellbeing.

Being physically and mentally prepared for what is happening, using your resources and those of your colleagues, teams and managers and recognising when you might need something specific such as hydration, food, rest and sleep will benefit you. By being in tune with **your** needs, at some point in each day, you will also recognise if you need support, from family, friends or from someone else.

Increased emotions are normal during and after a critical event



**You may be feeling some, none or all of these . . .
. . . this is normal as we are working and living in an abnormal situation**

Self-care

It is more important than ever to focus on boosting your self-care. Try to maintain healthy eating, monitor unhelpful drinking or smoking and get in your 1 hour's exercise each day. Try to limit your exposure to the 24/7 news, whilst using social media positively to catch up with family and friends.

Work Related Events During COVID 19

There may be many times over the next few weeks and months where events at work feel overwhelming. It might be a one off event or the constant need to be working continually at high pressure in possibly an unfamiliar environment.

Feelings and physical reactions to events are likely to fluctuate. Remind yourself that your reactions are a normal response to abnormal events.

Use the 'Check Out' time at the end of each shift or day to raise any concerns that you have about how things have been during the shift. It can be helpful to ask for and understand the whole picture relating to an incident as often we remain unaware of the full story. Talk to your colleagues, manager or family to offload. Or if you prefer, do a simple, pleasurable activity like a walk or bike ride. Make sure you get plenty of rest between work days and don't expect too much of yourself.

Consider seeking help if, after a period of time, you still notice that you have:

- Feelings continue to be overwhelming
- Nightmares, flashbacks and poor sleep
- No-one with whom you can discuss your feelings
- An inability to control anger
- Noticed that relationships are suffering
- Become accident prone
- Started taking unnecessary risks
- Changed your eating, drinking & smoking habits
- Started relying on medication
- Found yourself unable to find relief from tension or confusion
- Felt exhausted and empty
- Felt numb and cannot avoid being upset
- Felt unable to sense 'getting back to normal'

Confidential Support

Staff Support & Counselling Service	Telephone or on-line confidential support - 7 days a week - Referrals to routed via Exeter OH	rde-tr.counselling@nhs.net
Vivup Employee Assistance Provision	24/7 support line 6 sessions of telephone counselling Financial, debt & legal advice available	03303 800658 www.vivup.co.uk
Chaplaincy Support	Drop in and 'Listening Ear' Daily 12- 2pm Monday - Friday Phone Support	Chapel & Chapel Garden 01271 322362 or Ext 2362 juliecartwright1@nhs.net
TalkWorks	Priority access for NHS staff	0300 5553344 www.talkworks.dpt.nhs.uk
Managers & Teams	Group support for teams and managers 8 am – 8pm	dpt.od@nhs.net
NHS Hotline	Telephone support	0300 131 7000 or text FRONTLINE to 85258

End / Recovery

When more familiar working conditions return you may need time to recover physically and mentally. Take time to reflect and review. Support will continue to be available to individuals, teams and manager to facilitate this.