

COPING WITH STRESS

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Doing something to better manage stress might feel like it will take a lot time and energy, but taking a little time to fuel your own body and mind can bring great benefits. Here are some examples:

- Relax your mind by practicing mindfulness. It can help calm your mind and body to help you cope with illness, pain, and stress. You can do it anywhere.
- Relax your body with a massage, try yoga breathing, meditation, and exercises. You also should try to eat healthy, exercise, and get more sleep.
- Make time for social activities. Consider saying “yes” to a fun activity you've declined before.
- Take time to do simple things for yourself. It can help you recharge so you have more to give to others.

STRESS CARE FOR THE ‘NEW NORMAL’

Life has changed and so have our causes of stress. Many parts of the world are opening up again but it's not as it was. As we all begin to understand this “New Normal,” we need to make sure we are managing our stress so that we can all protect our long-term health.

- Know what to do if you are sick and are concerned about COVID-19. Contact a health professional before you start any self-treatment for COVID-19.
- Take care of your emotional health. Doing that will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family.
- Take care of your body. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals. Exercise regularly. Get plenty of sleep. Avoid excessive alcohol and drug use.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and your feelings.
- Check out Cigna’s Stress Care for the ‘New Normal’ website to access a number of stress-related tools.

SEE STRESS DIFFERENTLY

It is well known that chronic stress has a major impact on people’s ability to perform in their jobs and engage with society. Take your stress test to understand your stress, visualize it, and create a plan to take control.

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GETTING THROUGH WORK-RELATED STRESS

Whether you are going into work or working from home, the COVID-19 pandemic has probably changed the way you work. Fear and anxiety about this disease and other strong emotions can be overwhelming, and workplace stress can lead to burnout. How you cope with these emotions and stress can affect your well-being, the well-being of the people you care about, your workplace, and your community. During this pandemic, it is critical that you recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience and manage job stress, and know where to go if you need help.

Recognize the symptoms of stress you may be experiencing:

- Feeling irritation, anger, or in denial
- Feeling uncertain, nervous, or anxious
- Lacking motivation
- Feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burned out
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having trouble concentrating
- Feeling sad or depressed

Know the common work-related factors that can add to stress during a pandemic.

- Concern about the risk of being exposed to the virus at work
- Taking care of personal and family needs while working
- Managing a different workload
- Lack of access to the tools and equipment needed to perform your job
- Feelings that you are not contributing enough to work or guilt about not being on the frontline
- Uncertainty about the future of your workplace and/or employment
- Learning new communication tools and dealing with technical difficulties
- Adapting to a different workspace and/or work schedule

Follow these tips to build resilience and manage job stress.

- Communicate with your coworkers, supervisors and employees about job stress while maintaining social distancing.
- Talk openly to identify things that cause stress and work together to identify solutions.
- Ask about how to access mental health resources in your workplace.
- Identify those things you don't have control over and do the best you can with the resources available to you.

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- Keep a regular schedule, including sleep and breaks to stretch, exercise, or check in with your supportive colleagues, coworkers, family and friends.
- Spend time outdoors, either being physically active or relaxing.
- If you work from home, try to set a regular time to end your work for the day.

GETTING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays can bring a monumental amount of stress. There's financial pressure to buy the latest and greatest gifts for loved ones; social get-togethers you feel obligated to attend; family functions you are expected to cook for; fiscal deadlines at work you must meet; and traffic jams. But it is possible to stay sane during the holiday mayhem.

Below are some pointers for managing holiday stress:

- **Set reasonable expectations.** Don't expect this year to be the year where everything will be perfect. Make a personal decision to make the best of the holidays no matter what.
- **Identify your stressors.** For example, you have two sets of in-laws to spend time with. Decide when you will be spending time with each side of the family and who is in charge of what. Most importantly, ensure you communicate your plan to the others involved.
- **Recognize stress-induced patterns.** Do you drink or smoke more when stressed? What about overeating or skipping meals? Do you become snippy with loved ones? Make sure your outlets aren't bad for your health or hurting others.
- **Take care of yourself.** When you're worried about pleasing everyone else, it's easy to lose focus on your own needs. Keep exercising and get enough sleep. Drink lots of water and try eating healthy snacks before parties so you won't gorge on calorie filled goodies. Enjoy yourself though, after all the holidays are supposed to be a time of joy!
- **Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.
- **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan menus then make a shopping list. That'll prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. Make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.
- **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Take a walk at night. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.



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Supervisor's Toolbox Topic Meeting Report