

TIPS FOR REDUCING THE STRESS OF GETTING BACK TO 'NORMAL'

Due to the rise in COVID cases as a result of the Delta variant, getting back to 'normal' is more difficult than ever due to COVID fatigue, and ever-changing guidance from multiple sources. Therefore, it is crucial that staff recognize stress, anxiety, and burnout in themselves, their co-workers, and residents.

Definitions:

- **Stress:** a feeling of emotional or physical tension that can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous; your body's reaction to a challenge or demand in short bursts
- **Burnout:** a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed; characterized by three (3) dimensions:
 - Feeling of energy depletion or exhaustion;
 - Increased mental distance from one's job; or
 - Feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job

Three Stages of Stress:

1. Alarm
2. Resistance
3. Exhaustion

Five Stages of Burnout:

1. Honeymoon phase – when we undertake a new task, often experience high job satisfaction, commitment, energy, and creativity
2. Onset of stress – begins with an awareness of some days being more difficult than others
3. Chronic stress
4. Burnout
5. Habitual Burnout

Early Signs of Burnout:

1. Overwhelming exhaustion ("I can't do this anymore")
2. Sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment ("Maybe I'm not cut out for this")
3. Excessive workload and fatigue
4. Insomnia
5. Increased occurrence of illness
6. Feelings of unfairness
7. Loss of enjoyment
8. Feeling undervalued

Pandemic and Causes of Stress:

- Disrupted routines
- Lack of social support
- Loss of job/income
- Loss of physical touch
- Overwork
 - Latest data – employees working from home logging three (3) more hours per day on job
 - VPN providers report spikes in internet usage from midnight to 3a.m. that were not present before COVID

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COVID Distress May Look Like:

- Increased anxiety and uncertainty
- Feelings of loneliness or sadness
- Feelings of helplessness and frustration
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Changes in substance use
- Information burnout
- Exacerbation of existing mental health concerns

Study by American Psychological Association – March 2021:

- 61% of adults reported experiencing undesirable weight changes during the pandemic
- 67% said sleeping more or less than they wanted since the pandemic started
- 25% adults reported drinking more alcohol to cope
- Nearly half (47%) said they delayed or canceled health care services since the pandemic started

Strategies for Coping:

- Take note of when you are engaging in the unhealthy behavior (time of day, did something stressful happen, are you bored?)
 - Take note of how you feel after a certain behavior
 - Try substituting this behavior with another activity that doesn't make you feel worse after
- Set goals – make them specific and attainable
- Find an accountability buddy
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news
- Exercise regularly
- Get plenty of sleep and continue with preventive health measures
- Get vaccinated
- Make time to unwind
- Connect with others and with community or faith-based organizations
- Reach out to others to help
- Consider utilizing breathing exercises and practicing mindfulness
- Types of mindfulness activities (mindful reading, writing, listening, meditation, relaxation activities)
- Consider utilizing music
- Consider use of humor – read, listen to or watch humorous videos, tweets, monologues, GIFs and stories

Resources for Help in a Crisis:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
- National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453)
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- Veteran's Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text 8388255
- Disaster Distress Helpline: Call or Text 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish)
- The Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116