**The Coping Card**

At times, we all feel stress, grief, conflict, or disappointment. When you are having a tough time, try some of the coping strategies below, or contact a supportive resource of your choice.

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| **Take care of your body**   * Drink water & eat healthy meals * Keep a consistent sleep schedule * Meditate or take deep breaths * Exercise in a way you enjoy: walk, bike, swim, hike, or dance | **Influence your thoughts**   * Think of 1 good thing happening this week * Plan an activity that you’ll enjoy * Take time to laugh & celebrate small wins * Practice self-compassion (you are doing the best you can) |
| **Connect with others**   * Talk/text with a friend or loved one * Thank someone for heling you * Help someone accomplish a task * Perform a random act of kindness | **Engage in the moment**   * Listen or dance to music * Feel your hands or feet in water * Watch the sunset or spend time in nature * Pet or snuggle with your dog or cat |

**Providing Emotional Support to Teams/Groups:**

1. Round regularly (1 – 2 times daily) and connect with as many team/group members as possible. Follow the “Listen, Validate, Refer, and Care” model.
2. Incorporate wellbeing moments into huddles and team/group meetings.
3. Encourage team/group members to use available resources for support.

**Listen. Validate. Refer. Care.**

**Listen**

Round regularly (1 – 2 times daily) and connect with as many team/group members as you can. When you round, actively listen to your team/group members:

* Ask open-ended questions, like “how are you doing?” and “how can I best support you?”
* Listen actively: nod, maintain eye contact, lean in, etc.
* Listen to truly understand, not to respond
* Avoid interrupting or offering advice (try to create a different space for problem-solving)
* Before responding, allow a few seconds of silence. Your team/group member may have something else to say
* Reflect what your team/group member has shared with you
* Express empathy, and acknowledge the emotions being shared
* Focus on your team/group members, not your own thoughts (you can focus on your needs later)

**Validate**

Consider having separate conversations for problem-solving so that you can simply validate and support your team/group during rounds – and normalize their reactions

* “This is incredibly stressful, and your reaction is normal”
* “I am really sorry; it’s such a difficult time”
* “It sounds like this is taking a toll on you”
* And then. . . “I’m here to support you through this” or “I’m here for you”

Each person may react differently. Common stress reactions:

* Decreased work quality, attention to detail, and ability to focus
* Repeated absences and extended breaks
* Physical symptoms: stomach aches, headaches, changes in appetite
* Increased anger, irritability, and conflicts with colleagues
* Fatigue or sleep disturbances

**Refer**

Be aware of and acknowledge the need to access help, including professional counseling, peer support, and other resources

* Encourage team members to access wellbeing resources
* Model your own use of wellbeing resources
* Distribute coping cards (see above) electronically or a physical card

**Care**

It is important to care for your team/group members – and also to care for yourself. These tips are for everyone:

* Lean on your support network (peers/family)
* Identify one way you can engage in self-care each day – and ask your team/group members to do the same
* Provide as much specific information as possible to your team members (e.g., policy/practice updates)
* Embed moments of wellbeing in your daily huddles
* Thank your team members for all their work. Be specific about why you are grateful
* Model and encourage wellbeing behaviors: eat lunch, take breaks, and email only while at work

**Moments of Wellbeing in Huddles or Team/Group Meetings**

Consider integrating wellbeing exercises into daily huddles and team meetings; they take just a few minutes. With consistent usage, these tools can help reduce burnout and enhance resilience. General tips:

* Acknowledge: “We are going through a difficult time, and its normal to experience a range of emotions. Let’s start this huddle with a moment of self-care”
* Give team/group members a minute to think about their responses to your prompt
* Model each “moment” by sharing your own example

**Gratitude**

I am so thankful for you all and for the work you do to protect our people, families, and one another. Today, let’s be specific. Think of someone you would like to thank – maybe a family member who watches your kids while you’re at work, or a team member who helped you when you felt overwhelmed. If you are willing, please share your gratitude

**One Good Thing**

Staying positive is a powerful wellbeing tool. One way to stay positive is to recall something good. In thinking about the past few days, what is one good thing that has happened? If you are willing, please share

**Looking Forward** (use the day after One Good Thing)

Staying positive is a powerful wellbeing took. One way to stay positive is to think about something good coming up. What are you looking forward to in the next few days? If you are willing, please share

**Awe**

Today, we’ll focus on the emotions of awe and wonder. Can you think of something amazing or inspiring you experienced recently? Your moment of awe can be anything, from seeing a coworker go above and beyond to a great movie you recently watched. Please share your moment of awe

**Work – Life Balance (save for the end of the week)**

It is the end of the week. How are you going to spend your time away from work? Think of ways you plan to unplug, decompress, and relax, and please share. Some additional thoughts about going home:

* Think of 3 things that went well today
* Identify one thing that was difficult, and let it go
* Be proud of the care you delivered today
* Choose 1 thing you will do for self-care before you return to work
* Switch your attention away from work so you can be fully present at home

**Response Resources for Leaders**

During stressful events, employees rely on leaders to make decisions and provide support. Please remember that sudden, stressful, traumatic events make us forget that we are competent and in control. We may not have had control over the event, but we do have control over our collective response.

Effective leaders understand how stress affects their staff. Common reactions to stressful events fall into physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual categories:

* Feelings of stress, grief, fear, guilt, or anger
* Difficulty completing routine activities or a lack of interest in enjoyable activities
* Sleep disturbances, often including nightmares and thoughts about the event
* Changes in appetite, tiredness, headaches, and stomachaches
* Needing to talk, often repeatedly, about the event (s) and feelings associated with the event (s)
* A sense of meaninglessness, e.g., asking, “what’s the point?”
* Working below capacity

These are normal reactions to an abnormal event, and for most people, they are time limited. Research demonstrates that most people are resilient following a crisis. We are stronger than what we give ourselves credit for

**Be Aware of You:**

* First, stop and take time to understand your own reactions
* Take a moment to decide how you are going to take care of yourself later
* Be mindful and intentional of your own expression and tone. Your team/group will take their cues from you
* Leaders are often the face of the response. Resist any desire to isolate
* Practice what we preach and engage in healthy self-care

**How to Support Coping:**

* Knowing there is not a right way to react and recover
* Provide opportunities for employees to talk about their stressful experiences
* Acknowledge and encourage teamwork/group cooperation
* Take steps to reduce any additional stressors
* Provide as much information as possible and continue to update
* Express empathy and listen carefully
* Increase your visibility
* Acknowledge the value of professional counseling and encourage your employees to get whatever help they need

**Tips for compassionate communication**

* Show Respect: Respectful communication is particularly important when people feel vulnerable
* Express empathy by acknowledging the emotions of those who are suffering
* Listen and allow emotional expressions or crying without interruption
* Do not answer questions outside of your expertise. Refer people to appropriate experts
* Be aware of potential re-traumatizing events

**Encourage employees to use self-care. Specific self-care tips include:**

* Buy some flowers
* Sit outside and listen to the birds
* Cook a favorite meal
* Scroll through pictures on your phone
* Blow bubbles
* Light a scented candle
* Take a bubble bath
* Play with a pet
* Read a good book or listen to music

**Warning signs**

* Constant feelings of sadness or anxiety that prevent the completion of regular tasks
* Constant fixation on the event and an inability to focus
* Misuse of drugs or alcohol
* Inadvertent or flagrant disregard for safety
* Marked change in mood
* Statements that suggest potential self-harm

**Taking care of your emotional health during a medical health crisis**

It is normal to become anxious about an outbreak of an infectious disease and its potential spread. These are some tips to keep you emotionally healthy:

* Manage and alleviate your stress by taking time to take care of yourself
* Set limits on how much time you spend watching the news or reading about the outbreak
* Find a reputable source of information to learn the facts and keep updated on the illness

Take time to focus on things in your life that you do have control over like the following:

* Eat healthy foods and drink water
* Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol
* Get enough sleep and rest (7 – 9 hours)
* Exercise, get your heart rate up for 20 – 30 minutes every day

Use practical ways to relax:

* Taking deep breaths, stretching, meditating, or engaging in pleasurable hobbies
* Pace yourself between stressful activities, and do a fun thing after a hard task
* Use time off to relax – eat a good meal, read, listen to music, take a bath or talk to family
* Talk about your feelings to loved ones and friends often

**Recognize and heed early warning signs of stress**

**Your body:**

* Having stomachaches, headaches, diarrhea, body pain, chills, sweating, tremors, or muscle twitches
* Losing your appetite or eating too much
* Being easily startled

**Your emotions:**

* Being anxious or fearful
* Feeling depressed, guilty, angry, or overwhelmed by sadness
* Feeling heroic, euphoric, or invulnerable
* Not caring about anything

**Your thinking:**

* Having trouble remembering things, being confused or difficulty making decisions
* Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating

**Pay attention to your body, feelings, and spirit:**

* Think of how you handled your thoughts, emotions, and behavior around previous difficult events
* Feeling depressed or angry is common after a big event even when it does not directly affect you
* Take time to renew your spirit through meditation, prayer or helping others in need

Connect with others who may be experiencing stress about the outbreak. Talk about your feelings about the outbreak, share reliable health information and enjoy conversation unrelated to the outbreak to remind yourself of the many important and positive things in your life

If you are experiencing extreme symptoms of stress, such as trouble sleeping, inability to carry out your daily routine, using drugs or alcohol to cope or eating too much or too little, please contact your healthcare provider

Helpful resources:

SAMHSA Store: <https://store.samhsa.gov>

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html>