

Psychological Well-Being During COVID-19

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Stress = strain or pressure

- Humans and animals are equipped biologically to cope with stress.
- In response to stress, the brain adjusts the levels of certain hormones in our bodies... especially the hormone **cortisol**.



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Cortisol in a Burst

- A burst of cortisol
 - helps us to face challenges
 - inoculates us to handle stress better in the future
 - is like an injection with an immediate, short-acting effect

Sustained Release of Cortisol

- A longer flow of cortisol
 - begins to harm us
 - is like an IV treatment with harsh medicine
- The longer it flows, the more we need good physical and psychological coping strategies.

Stressful Factors in a Pandemic

- Personal health fears
- Changes to daily structure
- Changes in job situation
- Nuclear family concerns: childcare, parenting, too much togetherness
- Concerns about extended family, friends
- Social isolation
- Boredom
- Concerns about others' behaviors, attitudes
- Concerns about expenses
- Concerns about economy, personal financial future
- Etc., etc., etc.



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Signs that Stress Is Taking a Toll

In an abnormal situation like a pandemic, our normal stress reactions can begin to take a toll on

- our bodies
- our emotions
- our concentration, thinking, memory
- our behaviors



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How to Boost Your Resilience

Adopt an attitude of **wellness** and **adaptation**:

- Be a good observer of changes to your physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral functioning.
- Ask yourself what you need in order to function at your best under these abnormal circumstances. Maybe request others' input too.
- Ask yourself (and others) how you can fulfill these needs.



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Be a Wellness and Adaptation Leader

- Recognize your team's differing challenges.
- Provide support according to your team's actual or expressed needs.
- Recognize and support your team's strengths.
- Be open to your team's ideas.
- Support the use of outside resources.

Strategies for Psychological Well-Being

- Identify what matters most
- Regular self check-ins
- Self-compassion
- Reframe negative self-talk
- Common humanity
- Focus on the now
- Opportunities for personal control
- Appreciate the positives
- Sense of purpose/meaning
- Establish goals
- Schedule/Routine
- Limit media consumption
- Connect with others
- Identify coping skills
- Nurturing activities
- Incorporate humor
- Basic needs



Leadership Strategies

- Avoid assumptions
- Manage stress
- Role model for self-care
- Regular communications
- Share information with empathy and optimism
- Honesty and transparency
- Forum for feedback
- Listen
- Provide resources for support



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Additional Individual Support

- Some stress and worry is normal and expected

Monitor if:

- History of anxiety, depression, or other psychological disorder
- Unhealthy coping behaviors
- Worsening symptoms of stress
- Interference in daily functioning

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