

Mental Health during COVID-19



It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during and after a stressful situation.

Everyone reacts differently, and your own feelings will change over time. Notice and accept how you feel. Self-care during a stressful situation will help your long-term healing. Taking care of your emotional health will help you think clearly and protect yourself and your loved ones.

For Responders

To take care of others, responders must be feeling well and thinking clearly. If you are a front-line health service provider and would like to contact a psychologist at no cost, please visit Canadian Psychological Association.

Here are some important steps responders can take to cope with challenging situations:

Preparing for a Response:

- ☼ Talk to your supervisor and establish a plan for who will fill any urgent ongoing work duties unrelated to the emergency while you are engaged in the response.
- ☼ If you will be traveling or working long hours during a response, explain this to loved ones who may want to contact you. Come up with ways you may be able to communicate with them. Keep their expectations realistic and take the pressure off yourself.

During a Response:

Understand and Identify Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress

When stress builds up it can cause burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Recognize the signs of both of these conditions in yourself and other responders:

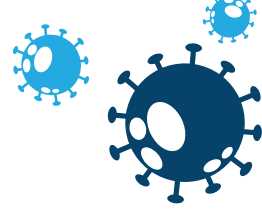
Signs of burnout can include:

- ☼ Sadness, depression, or apathy
- ☼ Blaming of others, irritability
- ☼ Lacking feelings, indifference
- ☼ Isolation or disconnection from others
- ☼ Poor self-care (hygiene)

Secondary Traumatic Stress can occur after exposure to another individual's traumatic experiences. Signs of secondary traumatic stress include:

- ☼ Excessive worry or fear about something bad happening
- ☼ Easily startled, or "on guard" all of the time
- ☼ Physical signs of stress (e.g. racing heart)
- ☼ Nightmares or recurrent thoughts about the traumatic situation

Self-care techniques can help prevent and reduce burnout and secondary traumatic stress:



- Maintain a healthy diet and get adequate sleep and exercise
- Wherever possible, limit working hours to no longer than 12-hour shifts
- Work in teams and limit amount of time working alone
- Take a break from media coverage of COVID-19
- Talk to supervisors, and teammates about your feelings and experiences
- Know that it is okay to draw boundaries and say “no”
- Avoid or limit caffeine and use of alcohol

It is important to remind yourself:

- It is not selfish to take breaks
- The needs of survivors are not more important than your own needs and well-being
- Working all of the time does not mean you will make your best contribution
- There are other people who can help in the response

After a Response:

- Allow time for you and your family to recover from responding to the outbreak
- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed or concerned

Reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of strength.

CHIMO Helpline - Help is just a phone call away: 1-800-667-5005

Hope for Wellness Helpline – The Hope for Wellness Helpline offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous people across Canada: 1-855-242-3310

Kids Help Phone - Text TALK to 686868 or call 1-800-668-6868 to chat with a volunteer Crisis Responder 24/7.