



Self-Care for Health Care Workers

Health care workers, including clinical providers, administrators and maintenance staff, face unique stressors and challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as evolving information and supply shortages, as well as increased risk of infection, workload and patient death toll. Some health care workers are working remotely and at the same time learning how to adapt their services to telehealth while staying connected to patients and coworkers. Many are experiencing these stressors on top of worrying about family, taking care of children, financial stressors and navigating physical distancing. It is natural to feel overwhelmed and have trouble coping.

Take Care of Yourself

It is important to think of self-care as not just something you learned in your training or something to recommend to patients or coworkers but as a crucial component of keeping yourself healthy and safe throughout this pandemic.

- **Take breaks.** Even if for just a minute or two, allow yourself to stop and refocus on where you are, how you are feeling and what you must do next.
- **Engage in fun, relaxing activities.** Set aside time for something outside of work that you enjoy such as reading, watching a movie or taking a walk.
- **Limit your exposure to the news.** Too much time watching or listening to news reports can become overwhelming. Seek updates and guidance two or three times per day.
- **Eat and sleep regularly.** In stressful situations, we often forget our most basic needs. Make time for adequate rest, healthy eating and engaging in physical activity.
- **Stay connected.**
 - Check in with family, friends and loved ones. Use text, video chat, phone or social media. A quick hello can remind you that people are grateful for your hard work and commitment.
 - Check in with colleagues while working. Speak with supervisors and coworkers, acknowledge the stress everyone shares and support each other.
 - Identify and use your support network. Know whom to reach out to when you feel sad or angry or need a break. Identify activities that help you cope with specific feelings.

Look Out for Your Coworkers

Pay attention to the way your coworkers talk and behave. This can help you recognize when someone may be struggling emotionally and thinking about suicide. It can be more challenging to notice warning signs of suicide in others if you are working in a busy setting or remotely and not seeing your coworkers every day. Be mindful of the following warning signs:

- Talking about death or suicide
- Showing feelings of hopelessness
- Saying they are a burden
- Avoiding friends and family
- Losing interest in activities
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Giving away possessions
- Saying goodbye to coworkers

Check in with your coworkers to see how they are coping, especially those with a history of suicide attempts, depression, anxiety or other mental illness, or those who have experienced a recent loss.

Support and Help are Available

If your symptoms of stress become overwhelming, or if you are thinking about suicide or know someone who is, reach out for support and help. You can contact NYC Well, a confidential 24/7 helpline staffed by trained counselors who can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in over 200 languages. Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text “WELL” to 65173 or chat at nyc.gov/nycwell.

The NYS COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline at 844-863-9314 is staffed from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week, with specially trained volunteer professionals who are there to listen, support and offer referrals if needed.

If you or someone you know is at immediate risk of hurting themselves, or in immediate danger because of a health condition or other situation, call 911.