Health Care Personnel and First Responders:
How to Cope With Stress and Build Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Providing care to others during the COVID-19 pandemic can lead to stress, anxiety, fear, and other strong emotions. How you cope with these emotions can affect your well-being, the care you give to others while doing your job, and the well-being of the people you care about outside of work. During the pandemic, it is critical to recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience and cope with stress, and know where to go if you need help.

Recognize the Symptoms of Stress You May be Experiencing:

- Feeling anger, irritation, or denial

- Feeling uncertain, nervous, or anxious

- Feeling helpless or powerless

- Lacking motivation

- Feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burned out

- Feeling sad or depressed

- Having trouble sleeping

- Having trouble concentrating

Experiencing or witnessing life-threatening or traumatic events impacts everyone differently. In some circumstances, the distress can be managed successfully to reduce negative health and behavioral outcomes. In other cases, some people may experience clinically significant distress or impairment, such as acute stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, compassion fatigue and burnout.

Tips to Help You Cope and Enhance Your Resilience:

- Communicate with your coworkers, supervisors, and employees about job stress.

- Talk openly about how the pandemic is affecting your work.

- Identify factors that cause stress and work together to identify solutions.

- Ask about access to mental health resources in your workplace.

- Remind yourself that everyone is in an unusual situation with limited resources.

- Identify and accept those things over which you have no control.

- Recognize that you are performing a crucial role in fighting this pandemic and that you are doing the best you can.

- Increase your sense of control by keeping a consistent daily routine when possible — ideally, one that is similar to your schedule before the pandemic.

- Try to get adequate sleep.

- Make time to eat healthy meals.

- Take breaks during your shift to rest, stretch, or check in with supportive colleagues, or co-workers.

- Exercise when you can. Spend time outdoors either being physically active or just relaxing. Do things you enjoy during non-working hours.

- Limit media time. Hearing and reading about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting and mentally exhausting, especially since you work with people directly affected by the virus.

- If you feel you may be misusing alcohol or other drugs (including prescriptions), ask for help.

- Engage in mindfulness techniques such as breathing exercises and meditation.

Source: CDC Covid-19 Resources