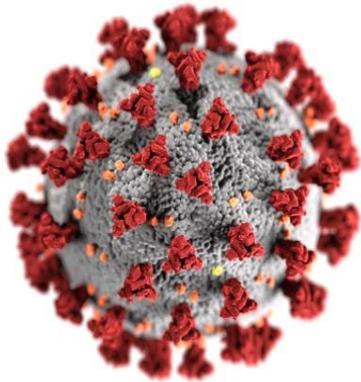


Helpful Tips for a Healthy Workforce: Support during the COVID-19 Response



Julie Paoline, MA, CPHA, CIC, FAPIC
Public Health Specialist

BUREAU OF EPIDEMIOLOGY



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Goals

- Ask health care leaders to pause, and consider what support is needed during this **unprecedented** event
- Let healthcare personnel (HCP) know that **we see you, we hear you**

▶ Definition of HCP

Healthcare personnel (HCP): Include, but are not limited to, emergency medical services personnel, nurses, nursing assistants, physicians, technicians, therapists, phlebotomists, pharmacists, students and trainees, other staff providing direct care, contractual staff not employed by the healthcare facility, and persons not directly involved in patient care but who could be exposed to infectious agents that can be transmitted in the healthcare setting (e.g., clerical, dietary, environmental services, laundry, security, engineering and facilities management, administrative, billing, and volunteer personnel).

▶ It's a marathon, not a sprint



Pictured: Dr. Allison Longenberger, one of the Department's epidemiologists

Unique challenges



Economic decline; Source: Forbes



Empty grocery shelves



Properties closed due to stay-at-home orders



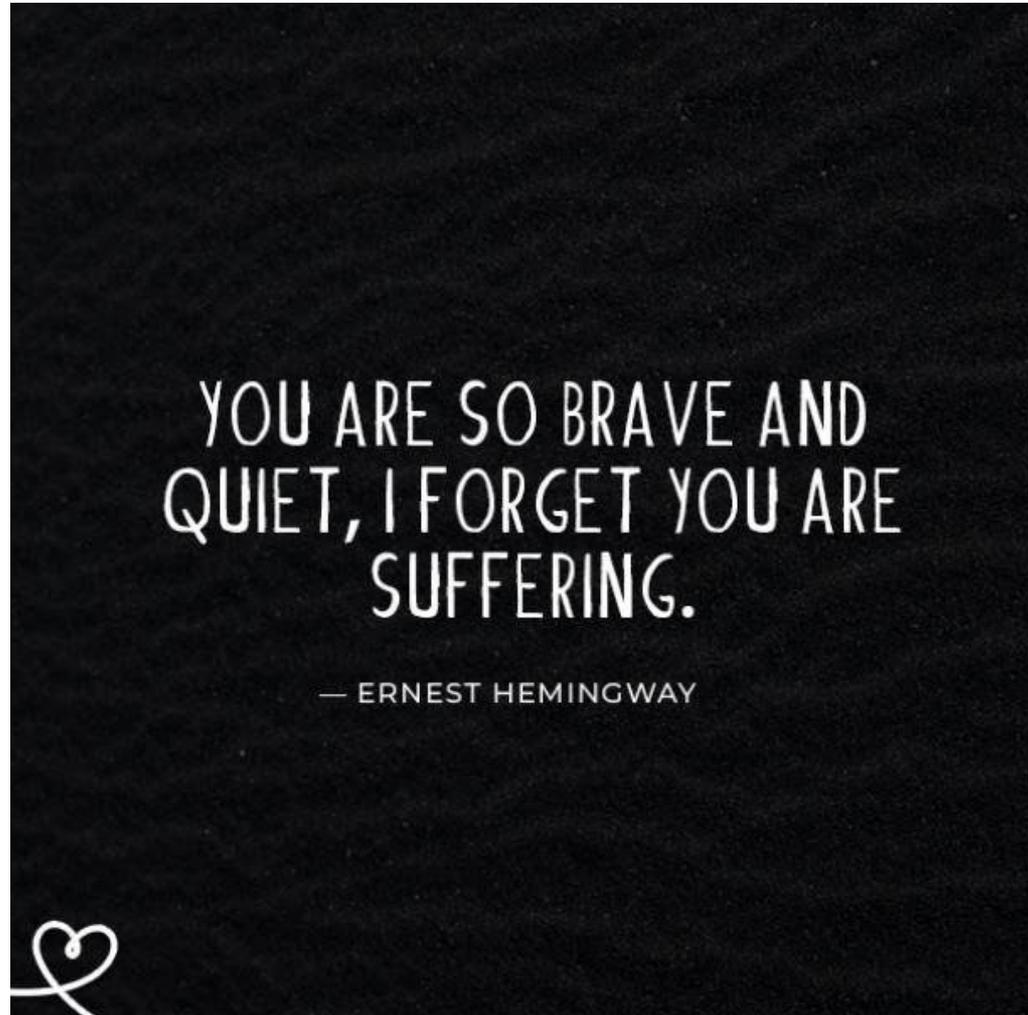
School closures; Source: 6ABC



A nurse at a PA hospital



▶ Let us not forget



Source: Pinterest

▶ Resilience



Source: Psychology Today



Let's Talk about Stress

HOW **STRESS** & **ANXIETY** AFFECTS YOUR BODY

BRAIN

Difficulty concentrating, anxiety, depression, irritability, mood, mind fog

CARDIOVASCULAR

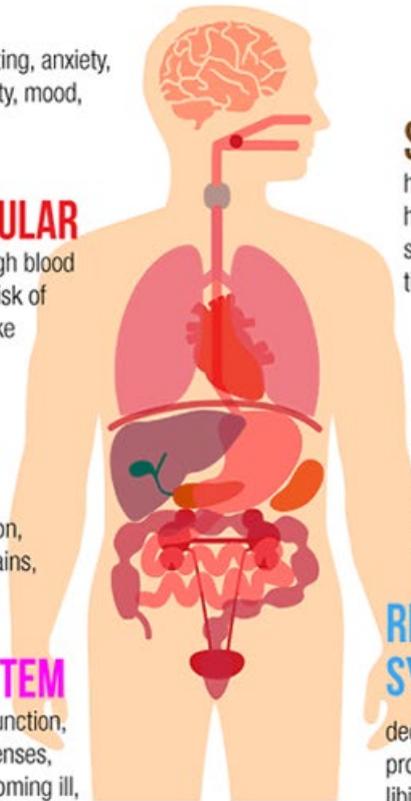
higher cholesterol, high blood pressure, increased risk of heart attack and stroke

JOINTS AND MUSCLES

increased inflammation, tension, aches and pains, muscle tightness

IMMUNE SYSTEM

decreased immune function, lowered immune defenses, increased risk of becoming ill, increase in recovery time



SKIN

hair loss, dull/brittle hair, brittle nails, dry skin, acne, delayed tissue repair

GUT

nutrient absorption, diarrhea, constipation, indigestion, bloating, pain and discomfort

REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

decreased hormone production, decrease in libido, increase in PMS symptoms

Source: Prevention

▶ How this affects the job

- Staff can lose confidence and may become angry, irritable, or withdrawn
- Some staff may dread going into work, and start to arrive late or call out
- Some may begin considering not going back, or questioning their career choice

▶ Know the Signs of Stress

The body has a lot of signals to let us know that stress levels are high. These responses can manifest in our **behaviors, bodies, emotions** and **thoughts**.



Source: Pew Research

Know the Signs of Stress

Behaviors

- Worrying excessively
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- Blaming other people for everything
- Having difficulty communicating or listening
- Having difficulty accepting help
- Inability to have fun or feel pleasure
- An increase in your alcohol or tobacco use

Bodies

- Having headaches and other pains
- Losing your appetite or overeating
- Sweating or having chills
- Getting tremors or muscle twitches
- Feeling always on alert
- Being jumpy or easily startled

Emotions and Thoughts

- Being anxious
- Feeling depressed, guilty or angry
- Feeling heroic, euphoric or invulnerable
- Not caring about anything
- Feeling overwhelmed by sadness
- Having trouble making decisions



Common Fears and Concerns of Healthcare Personnel during COVID-19

Fears and Concerns

Information

- We do not have access to current information and communication.
- We do not always know if we can trust what we see or read.
- Information is changing very quickly and it's difficult to keep up.

▶ Fears and Concerns

Not being heard

- Leadership may not know our biggest concerns or how to handle them.
- Unsure who to report concerns to, everyone seems so busy.

Fears and Concerns

Using personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Why is leadership not using the PPE we are expected to use?
- How can we be expected to work in settings with COVID-19 when we do not have the right PPE and/or training?
- What if we don't have enough PPE?

▶ Fears and Concerns

Staffing/Extra Pay/Job Security

- What is our organization doing to make sure enough staff are working? Will I be told I have to come into work?
- Will we be paid more if we work with community members who have confirmed or suspected COVID-19 disease?
- We worry about not getting paid, and retaliation for speaking up about concerns.

▶ Fears and Concerns

Support for our families

- We worry about being exposed to COVID-19 at work and bringing it home to our families.
- We need access to childcare when we work longer hours and when schools are closed.
- Who will support our families if we are infected?

▶ Fears and Concerns

Access to testing

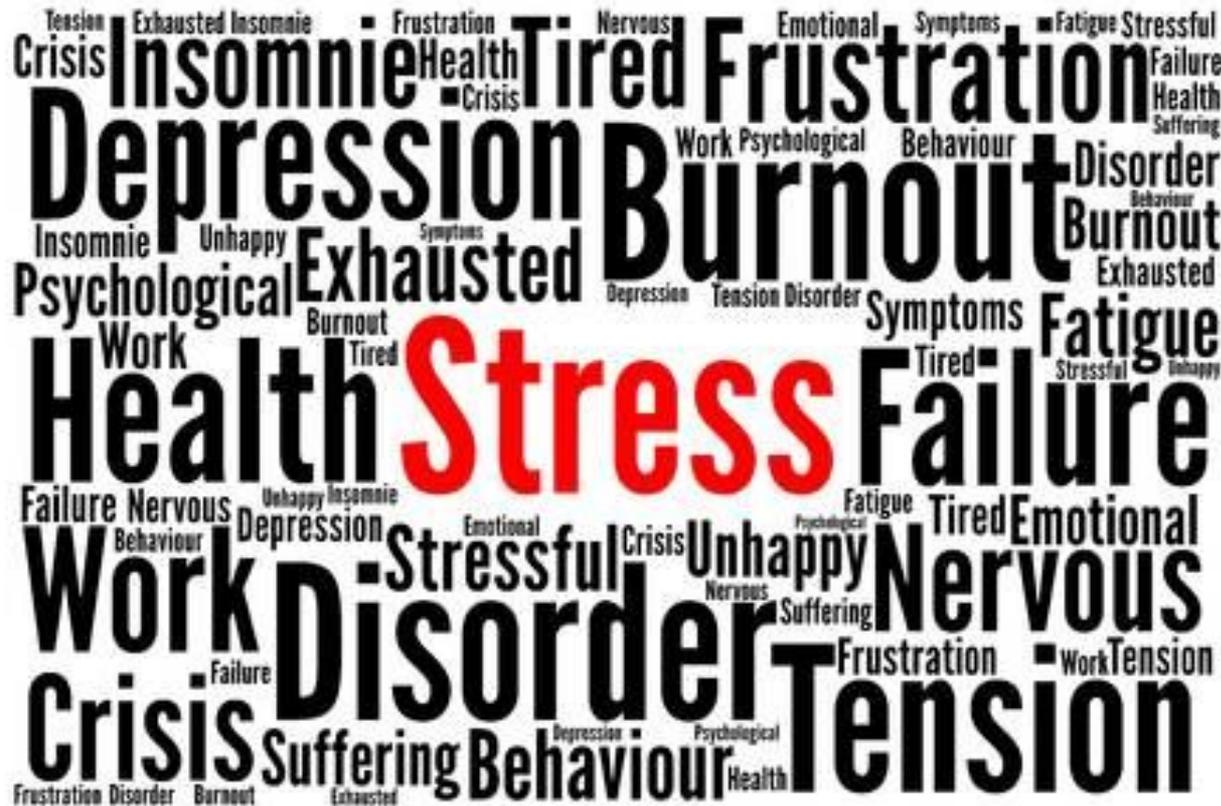
- We worry about not being able to get tested fast if we develop COVID-19 symptoms. We worry that infection can spread at work and at home.

Fears and Concerns

What to expect

- No one has prepared us for what to expect or how long this will go on for.
- What will happen if coworkers get seriously ill or die from COVID-19?
- How will we handle the grief and loss?
What resources are available if we need help?

▶ A fog of stress



Source: stock.adobe.com

A Personal Story

Health Care Leaders can help!

1. Walk the floors
2. Talk with your staff and listen
3. Show safe PPE use
4. Start a buddy system
5. Share information
6. Connect staff to support services
7. Hold COVID-19 exercises



Source: Pinterest

Other Considerations

- Organize peer support
- Develop a plan to provide boarding or food support
- Encourage a stress management plan
- Provide a mechanism for staff to make recommendations to leadership
- Establish a resilience safety officer

▶ Healthy coping mechanisms

- Recognize and heed early warning signs of stress
- Take time to connect with others and process feelings of stress
- Consider what helps you to relax



Source:
Prevention

Know where to get support

- **Support & Referral Helpline (24/7 mental health and emotional support)**
1-855-284-2494 (TTY: 724-631-5600)
- **Crisis Text Line**
Text "PA" to 741-741
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
1-800-273-8255
- **Disaster Distress Helpline**
1-800-985-5990
- **Get Help Now Hotline (substance use disorders)**
1-800-662-4357

▶ Thank You!



Source: Forbes

Comments or Questions:
RA-DHICOR@pa.gov