

# HELPING MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS COPE WITH COVID-19

To take care of others during a health situation, first care responders must be feeling well and thinking clearly. Stress prevention and management are critical for responders to keep helping in the situation.

## IMPORTANT:

### UNDERSTAND AND IDENTIFY EXHAUSTION AND SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS DURING A RESPONSE.

#### SIGNS OF EXHAUSTION YOU MAY BE:

- Sad, depressed, or apathetic.
- Easily frustrated
- Blaming others; irritable
- Lacking feelings; indifferent
- Isolated or disconnected from others
- Showing poor hygiene
- Tired, exhausted or overwhelmed
- Feeling like:
  - A failure
  - Nothing you can do will help
  - You are not doing your job well
  - You need alcohol/other drugs to cope.

#### SIGNS OF SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS YOU MAY BE:

- Excessively worried or fearful about something bad happening.
- Easily startled, or “on guard” all the time.
- Experiencing physical signs of stress (e.g. racing heart).
- Having nightmares or recurrent thoughts about the traumatic situation.
- Having the feeling that others’ trauma is yours.

### TIPS FOR PSYCHIATRISTS AND OTHER MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

- Stay informed.
- Correct misinformation.
- Limit media exposure.
- Educate: psychiatrists and mental health professionals are in an important position to influence patient behaviors.
- Maintain restful sleep, eating regular meals, and exercising.
- Limit use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- Talk to loved ones about worries and concerns.
- Practice calming strategies including diaphragmatic breathing and muscle relaxation.
- Engage in enjoyable hobbies and activities.
- Refer to specialized mental health care or emergency evaluation when a patient experiences severe emotional distress, develops a recurrence or worsening of mental illness, regularly uses substances to manage negative emotions, or has thoughts of harming themselves or others.
- Identify and support high-risk patients, with:
  - Delusions
  - Obsessive-compulsive thoughts and behaviors.
  - A predominance of somatic symptoms.
  - Other active and uncontrolled symptoms.
  - Those previously exposed to severe trauma may be particularly vulnerable.
- More frequent clinical contact (using Tele-Health as needed) can help address emerging concerns, which may help avoid severe exacerbations or hospitalizations.
- Ensure patients have adequate supplies of medications to avoid interruption in dosing during potential disruptions of pharmacy supply chains.

### STRATEGIES FOR YOUR WELL-BEING

- Take care of yourself and your loved ones.
- Monitor yourself for stress reactions.
- Ensuring that your family, office or organization is safe, have a plan to monitor the course of the outbreak and adjust your response to ensure adherence to the most current guidance.
- Connect with colleagues.
- Communicate constructively.
- Limit media exposure.
- Self check-ins.
- Honor your service.

Knowing that you have stress and coping with it as you respond will help you stay well, and this will allow you to keep helping those who are affected.

For more details and take-out tips, please access:  
[www.innovamd.com](http://www.innovamd.com)