

Managing Stress in the Era of COVID

Best Practices for Surviving Emergency Service Careers



What contributes to increased stress related to COVID?

- ❖ We are taught to take care of others 1st
- ❖ Things we used to recharge may have been taken away
- ❖ Interacting with the public carries increased risk of virus exposure
- ❖ Increased isolation at a time we need human connection even more
- ❖ ETOH consumption (or other chemicals and foods) is up significantly
- ❖ Shift work & already disrupted sleep already puts us at risk
- ❖ The impact is cumulative & you may not notice the build-up
- ❖ Too much focus on PPE and little provided for emotional protection and safety
- ❖ Many changes to operations and restrictions related to COVID precautions
- ❖ Higher risk of “burnout” due to physical, emotional & mental exhaustion
- ❖ May be a higher risk of suicidal ideation
- ❖ COVID pandemic is not the only major stressor of these times or in your world

What actions to take and changes to make that may be solutions?

- ❖ Communicate.....do not suffer in silence
- ❖ You learned to suppress emotions while on the call; find appropriate time & manner to let them out
- ❖ Find & be available to connect with others
- ❖ Engage in healthy coping rather than destructive behavior
- ❖ A healthy diet & regular exercise is a foundation for stress management
- ❖ Foster & seek out positive & deep personal relationships
- ❖ Learn to recognize the signs & symptoms of when you are stressed
- ❖ There is a cumulative benefit to the many small & positive things you choose
- ❖ Keep a consistent routine off-duty because it is hard to do on-duty
- ❖ Allow for fun & laughter: reduces stress/enhances immune system/releases endorphins & serotonin
- ❖ Understand the importance of your work: it really matters to others
- ❖ Set your own reasonable success metrics
- ❖ Notice the things you are grateful for & the support you receive from others
- ❖ Strive for that balance of work vs. family vs. social aspects of life
- ❖ Realize that everyone is impacted somehow & this pandemic will end
- ❖ Allow for sleep & rest as a regular routine
- ❖ Learn nervous system regulation: mind-body feedback / breathing / mindfulness
- ❖ Control what you can, including all of the above

