

Contacting VITAL WorkLife is fast and easy. Help is just a phone call away at 877.731.3949, or through the VITAL WorkLife App. We are here to support you during this stressful time.

How Healthcare Professionals Can Sustain Well Being in COVID-19 Crisis

By Liz Ferron, MSW, LICSW

On top of burnout, the spread of COVID-19 has brought more challenges to the forefront for all healthcare providers, including:

- A more anxious and agitated patient population
- An urgent need for all specialties and areas of medicine to regroup, reprioritize and problem solve related to pandemic
- Increased stress and tension



Those in urgent care, family medicine, internal medicine, emergency and critical care—first responders—are experiencing all of the above, in addition to:

- Increased workload
- Insufficient resources
- Ever changing approach to care
- Significant health risks to self and family (a perfect example of this, as one of my clients said, “I’m worried about what I’m bringing home to my family, particularly my 70-year-old husband.”)

At VITAL WorkLife we’re not here to tell you how or when to deliver care, how to protect yourself from contracting the virus, or what your family should be doing. We know you have these answers.

We are here to provide emotional support, debriefing, stress management, care and compassion. We’re also available to talk about concerns that have nothing to do with COVID-19, but that contribute to your personal or professional well being.

The Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS)¹, offers 10 valuable tactics for healthcare workers to help sustain well being during this difficult time:

1. **Meet basic needs:** make sure to maintain regular eating, drinking and sleeping habits.
2. **Take breaks:** allow yourself time to rest from caring for patients. Whenever you can, give yourself something fun or calming to do that is unrelated to work. Whether it’s going for a walk, listening to music or an uplifting podcast, reading a book or calling a friend, it’s important to take breaks to rest, as it leads to better care of your patients.
3. **Talk with your colleagues:** connecting with your colleagues provides support for one another as outbreaks like this can cause people to isolate themselves due to fear and anxiety.
4. **Communication is key:** when you are communicating with your colleagues, make sure it’s in a clear and optimistic manner. Compliment one another, share your frustrations as well as solutions. These types of conversations can be motivating!

5. **Connect with family:** be in touch with your loved ones, people outside of healthcare that are your support system.
6. **Respect differences:** recognize that your colleges, patients, friends and family cope with stressful situations differently. Some may prefer to talk about it while others prefer to be alone.
7. **Stay updated:** tune in to reliable sources, stay informed of the situation and any current or future plans.
8. **Limit media exposure:** while it is important to stay updated, it's also important to take breaks from media coverage and focus on yourself and what you can control.
9. **Self check-ins:** make sure to monitor yourself, be aware of symptoms of depression or stress disorder—prolonged sadness, issues sleeping, intrusive memories, hopelessness. In any case, talk to a peer, supervisor or seek professional help. If you are a member of VITAL WorkLife, tap into your counseling or [peer coaching resources](#), available at no cost to you and your family members.
10. **Honor your service:** remember you are working a noble profession, caring for patients in a highly stressful time. Honor yourself and your colleagues for their service.

Keep Yourself in the Equation

It's common during times like this to stay focused on only what needs to be addressed or completed next and move through each day accordingly. This can work for a day or two, but not in the long run. It takes a toll. It's important to intentionally integrate self-care into your day to day experience—for your own well being, and that of your patients, team and family members.

No one strategy will work for everyone. It will be important for you to find strategies realistic for your personal situation and preferences.

There is no time like the present for you to be accessing the many resources available to you through VITAL WorkLife. It is our privilege to serve you during this challenging time and are so appreciative of the important work you are doing. We're here for you 24/7.

Physician Well Being Resources Members: Call 877.731.3949 or through the VITAL WorkLife App

We Can Help

Check out our [COVID-19 Resource Site](#) for additional resources or [contact us](#) today to discuss how [Physician Well Being Resources](#) can support your physicians and providers in times of crisis.

Sources:

¹ *Sustaining the Well-Being of Healthcare Personnel during Coronavirus and other Infectious Disease Outbreaks* by Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS)
https://www.cstsonline.org/assets/media/documents/CSTS_FS_Sustaining_Well_Being_Healthcare_Personnel_during.pdf.pdf