



Helping Each Other Through Times of Stress

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Many of us have faced challenges that are stressful and overwhelming, and we may have feelings of isolation, anxiety, hopelessness and depression. These feelings of stress can affect our work and home lives.

The following information will help in identifying signs of stress in our colleagues as well as in ourselves, finding ways in which we can connect with each other in meaningful ways and learning where to get support.

WHAT WE KNOW

- These challenges may get worse before they get better.
- We need to normalize the experience of stress and anxiety during these challenging times.
- Everyone has a role to play and a duty to support each other.

WHAT WE MUST ACHIEVE TOGETHER

Be aware of the risks and what to look out for.

- Learn about the signs and symptoms of stress and distress and what to look out for in ourselves and others.

Be willing to connect with each other in a meaningful way.

- Engage in meaningful conversation about what we are experiencing. Make time for each other and listen to understand.
- Be present and pay attention. Practice regular well-being rounding, and schedule time to check in with each other.

Take action to help people get the support they need.

- Make sure everyone knows how to access resources to support well-being. Add information on support resources to staff meeting agendas and in communications.
- Make information visible and easily accessible. Post information, contact numbers and websites in break spaces and common areas.
- Give explicit permission to seek help without judgment or professional repercussions, and with confidentiality.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR STRESS?

Everyone. While most health care workers report elevated levels of stress, the levels vary.

People generally fall into one of three groups:

Group 1: The Surprisingly Resilient (The smallest group. Learn from them and monitor for change.)

Group 2: The Understandably Exhausted (The largest group. Support them, engage in meaningful conversation, and connect to resources to stop them from worsening.)

Group 3: The Concerningly Vulnerable (Not an insignificantly sized group. Requires intervention.)

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

- Indecisiveness
- Trouble functioning at work
- Errors due to lack of focus
- Significant memory lapses
- Irritable or aggressive behavior
- Hypervigilance and easy startle
- Disheveled appearance
- Avoidance of stressful work situations

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- Sadness and demoralization
- Low energy
- Intense anxiety when at work
- Poor focus and concentration
- Hopelessness or helplessness
- Guilt about not doing enough
- Not feeling comfortable around others
- Finding interactions exhausting

WHAT TO SAY WHEN SOMEONE IS HURTING

- “Are you OK?”
- “I am worried because this continues to be hard, and it will be for some time.”
- “What are you doing to cope?”
- “What supports do you have?”
- “What do you need to support you?”

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Visit the [Office of Well-Being website](#) for mental health support resources and information to support well-being.

JHEAP is available 24/7/365 to all faculty, staff and their families by providing confidential counseling for up to six visits at no cost. Call **888-978-1262** to connect to a Johns Hopkins on-site licensed clinician or to get referrals to local counselors.