Psychological Coping during Disease Outbreak

Healthcare professionals and first responders

APART FROM THESE COMMON POST-CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS REACTIONS, HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS AND FIRST RESPONDERS MAY ALSO EXPERIENCE DISTRESS PARTICULARLY RELATED TO THEIR WORK SUCH AS HELPlessness, GUILT, FRUSTRATION IN FACE OF:

- A NOVEL DISEASE WITHOUT AN EFFECTIVE TREATMENT YET
- INCREASED WORKLOAD
- THINKING ONESELF SHOULD/COULD HAVE DONE MORE
- FEAR AND ANXIETY OF BEING INFECTED
- PRESSURES OR EXPECTATIONS FROM PATIENTS AND OTHERS
- WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND INADEQUATE SUPPORT
- EXPERIENCE OR WITNESS OF VIOLENCE, PAIN AND SUFFERING ETC

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**DOS:**

- Understand and evaluate your role, responsibilities, capacity, and risks in the job objectively.
- Allow yourself time to make honest and informed decisions for yourself.
- Allow and accept your own emotions. Take time to understand and express your feelings and needs.
- Reach out to loved ones in times of difficulty and distress, or when making important decisions.
- Maintain routines as much as possible, try to eat regularly and ensure adequate sleep and rest.
- Seek support and supervision in the workplace regularly if needed.
- Adopt helpful ways that you had used in the past to endure hardship.

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**DON'TS:**

- Take more responsibilities and work than one could handle.
- Work excessively without taking any breaks or until you feel extremely exhausted.
- Set unrealistic or unreasonable expectations and demands on yourself (e.g., “I have to cure every patient.”)
- Minimize personal concerns and needs, thinking they are unimportant.
- Withdraw from your social network and support such as families and friends.
- Resort to alcohol, smoking, caffeine, or drugs in managing stress.

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**24 Hours**

*Experiencing suffering and moments of vulnerability in our lives is a shared, human experience. Only after taking care of ourselves can we have the ability to care for others around us.*

**If you feel an immense amount of stress, or if your body exhibits different reactions, you can try to just sit quietly, and slowly breathe in and out.**

**Along with the rise and fall of each breath, observe your feelings and thoughts in a nonjudgmental way.**

**Whenever your body or mind feels any disturbance or pain, gently respond, understand, and treat yourself with compassion.**

**TAKING GOOD CARE OF ONESELF IS ALSO A WAY OF BEING RESPONSIBLE TO OTHERS. IF YOU NOTICE YOUR DISTRESS HAS BECOME PERSISTENT (E.G. >1 MONTH) OR IS GREATLY AFFECTING YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND/OR DAILY FUNCTIONING, DO CONSIDER SEEKING PROFESSIONAL HELP.**

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