



Signs of Stress

- Anxiety, restlessness, fear
- Insomnia or other sleep problems
- Fatigue
- Recurring dreams or nightmares or intrusive thoughts
- Stomach or gastrointestinal upset/appetite change
- Heart palpitations/fluttering
- Preoccupation with the disaster events or people they helped
- Sadness and crying easily, hopelessness, or despair
- Hyper-vigilance; easily startled
- Irritability, anger, resentment, increased conflicts with friends/family
- Overly critical and blaming others or self
- Grief, guilt, self-doubt
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs, misuse of prescription medication
- Isolation or social withdrawal
- Burnout and compassion fatigue

First Responders: Stress Management & Coronavirus

Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you, and your family; you may also experience secondary traumatic stress. Sources of stress for emergency responders may include witnessing human suffering, risk of personal harm, intense workloads, life-and-death decisions, and separation from family. Stress prevention and management is critical for responders to stay well and to continue to help in each situation. Responders can take action to protect themselves and to manage stress before a disaster or traumatic event and during the response and recovery phases.

Disasters such as COVID have an impact on everyone emotionally and psychologically, including tremendous strains on your family.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations

How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, experiences, support systems, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in.

People who may respond more strongly to the stress of a crisis include:

Older people and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19

Children and teens

People who are helping with the response to COVID-19, like doctors, other health care providers, and first responders

People who have disabilities, mental health conditions or struggle with substance misuse

Things you can do to Build Strength to Face the Work

- Eat healthy
- Exercise, spend time outdoors
- Deep, restful, sufficient sleep

Avoid or limit caffeine and alcohol use, and stay connected to people

(Foundational tips for the ability to manage stress but not always possible)

Daily Tangible Tools to Dial Down Emotions

- Label your emotion in the moment: Angry, Sad, Frustrated, Helpless, etc! This helps put space between you and the emotion
- Schedule a daily 5 minute worry session (fully indulge, schedule it daily and then let it go). You can share it with someone safe or just vent to yourself
- List 2 things you are grateful for (consider sharing it with someone)
- Spend time out in nature, take your dog for a walk

One dynamic of stress response is tunnel/laser vision. This can be helpful in life threatening situations but under chronic stress conditions can lead to negative thinking

- Re-frame your negative thoughts, change your perspectives to something more positive
- Practice breathing and relaxation techniques
- Work in teams and limit amount of time working alone
- Seek social support from family members and/or friends and maintain social connections while practicing safe social distancing when possible
- Be sure to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Overexposure can increase stress

Make sure the COVID-19 information you are reading is from credible sources, and share accurate information about how the virus and how it spreads. Having access to resources that accurately updates you with information about COVID-19 is essential. Sharing accurate information can alleviate worry and enable better communication and connections within the community.

[Coronavirus.utah.gov](https://coronavirus.utah.gov) is the official Utah website and is updated daily

Tips for First Responders Families:

Adjusting to life at home: Tips for families of returning Disaster Responders

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Adjusting-to-Life-at-Home/SMA14-4872>

SAMHSA Disaster Helpline

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

CDC COVID-19 STRESS and COPING

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

LEXIPOL First Responders, Stress Management and Coronavirus

<https://info.lexipol.com/webinar-coronavirus-stress-management>

Managing Anxiety and Stress During COVID-19

<https://www.southcoast.org/managing-anxiety-and-stress-during-covid-19/>

Thank you for answering each call to Serve and Protect, starting with Serving and Protecting yourself!!

human services