Coping During the Time of COVID-19

Presented by the NJ Hope and Healing Program
Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.

-Audre Lorde, writer & activist
Pandemic Disruptions

- Normal, everyday patterns of life
- Suffering and death of loved ones
- Disconnection from friends and personal support system
- Civic/community engagement
- Cultural rituals
- Wellness routine
- Childcare
(A Few) of the Disruptions Healthcare Responders Face

- Loss of certainty and predictability
- Loss of control
- Suffering and death of patients and coworkers
- Insufficient staffing
- Difficult on-the-fly decisions
Cont. (A Few) of the Disruptions Healthcare Responders Face

- Loss of ability to feel part of the team
- Illness and uncertain recovery, or deaths, of coworkers
- Constant demands, noise, use of PPE
- Insufficient support from administration/government
- Disconnected from friends and family
Those who work with the suffering suffer themselves because of the work.

-Charles Figley (2002), Treating Compassion Fatigue
Three Levels of Self-Care

**LEVEL I**
Immediate, in the moment stress reduction

**LEVEL II**
Daily routines to maintain wellness, manage distress

**LEVEL III**
Long-term investment in wellness and alleviating suffering
What can I do right now?

What can I change or add to my daily routine?

Eventually...what longer term changes can I make?
Let's try some mindfulness!
What is mindfulness?
- A "moment-to-moment awareness of one's experience without judgment"

What are the benefits of mindfulness?
- Decreases overthinking
- Increases attention
- Reduces stress
- Improves relationship satisfaction
- Helps alleviate chronic pain
- Increased immune functioning

(Daphne M. Davis, PhD, and Jeffrey A. Hayes, PhD)
Mindful Breathing Exercise: Belly Breathing

- Inhale slowly through your nose and fill your belly by pushing your stomach out
- Exhale slowly through your mouth and pull in your belly towards your spine
- Activates Parasympathetic Nervous System (i.e., your calming control center)
Mindful Breathing Exercise: Square Breathing

- Start by visualizing a square
  - 1. As you go across the first side of the square, breathe in through your nose or mouth for 4 counts
  - 2. As you go down the second side, hold your breath for 4 counts
  - 3. As you go across the third side, exhale for 4 counts
  - 4. As you go up the fourth side, hold for 4 counts
- Repeat as many times as you want
- It can be helpful to trace the square with your finger
Daily Mindfulness

Other forms of mindfulness: progressive muscle relaxation (great for sleep), guided visualization, mindful yoga, body scans, loving kindness exercises.

Mindfulness can also just be paying attention to the present moment without judgment.
SLEEP HYGIENE

- Begin rituals that help you relax each night
- Don't engage in strenuous activity or exercise close to bedtime
- Try to get bright light in the morning
- Limit your exposure to bright light in the evening
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, or large meals before bed
- Avoid engaging in activities other than sleep and sex in your bed
- If possible, set aside specific time for sleep
SELF-COMPASSION

- Self-compassion is an "extension of kindness, care, warmth, and understanding toward oneself when faced with shortcoming, inadequacies, or failures" (Kristen Neff, Ph.D.)
- Can be described in three parts:
  1) Treating yourself with kindness, rather than judgment
  2) Acknowledging that suffering and imperfection are parts of being human
  3) Examining our emotional experiences from a balanced and non-judgmental perspective
Community

- It's normal to feel hesitant about opening up to people.
- Seeking support from family, friends, and co-workers is a form of self-care.
- If you are spiritual or religious, lean on that community.
- Consider seeking out support groups for frontline workers.
16 Other Ways to Cope

► Maintain a consistent routine when possible
► Identify and accept the things you have no control over
► Take breaks from media, including social media
► Happy hour zoom hang outs with co-workers or friends
► Do things you enjoy during your time off
► Game night with family or roommates
► Wash your face during breaks or between shifts
► Listen to music
► Journal
► Exercise
► Go outside (even if it's just for 15 minutes)
► Eat healthy, nourishing foods
► Start a garden or get a houseplant
► Take a long bath
► Reach out to text support services
► Seek professional help
Resources

► NJ Hope and Healing (who we are!)
  ➤ https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/initiatives/disaster/

► Mental Health America’s webpage for frontline worker’s
  ➤ https://mhanational.org/covid19/frontline-workers

► The Free Mindfulness Project’s free guided and non-guided mindfulness audio files
  ➤ http://www.freemindfulness.org/download

► National Center for PTSD’s Resources for Healthcare Workers and Responders
  ➤ https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/list_healthcare_responders.asp

► Mental Health Association of New Jersey (MHANJ)’s free online support group

► Harmony Bay Wellness’s free online support group for essential workers
What are two things I will commit to doing for myself that I learned about today?

What are two things I already do that I will continue to do?
Thank you for all that you do!

If you ever need to reach us please email  femafrontline@gmail.com

Follow us on Instagram  @njhh_gsappfrontline
The Center for Psychological Services (CPS) of the Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP), in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Human Services’ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Disaster and Terrorism Branch, offers this Crisis Counseling Program through a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA/SAMHSA) grant. This program is brought to you through the New Jersey Hope and Healing Crisis Counseling Program.