

Coping with Job Stress during the COVID-19 Pandemic

by Dr. Bernadine Duncan

The COVID-19 pandemic has been catastrophic on so many levels. It has caused overwhelming fear and anxiety and changed the way we view our workplace. Job stress has catapulted to excessive levels during this pandemic and oftentimes you are not able to recognize its symptoms. Because of the damage stress can cause to your overall health, it is important for you to know which factors add to your level of stress, recognize the symptoms of stress, and take steps to manage your stress*.

Some of job-related factors that can add to your level of stress include:

- Concern about the risk of being exposed to the virus from someone else at work
- Taking care of personal and family needs while you are working
- Managing a different workload than you are accustomed to
- Lack of access to the tools and equipment needed to perform your job
- Feelings that you are not contributing enough at work
- Feeling uncertain about the future of your job and unpaid bills
- Learning new communication tools and dealing with technical difficulties
- Adapting to remote locations and a different work schedule
- Anger over the notion that your employer does not care about your health

Some of the symptoms include:

- Feeling irritation, anger, or in denial
- Feeling uncertain, nervous, or anxious
- Lacking motivation
- Feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burned out
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having trouble concentrating

Steps you can take to manage job stress:

- Increase your sense of control by developing a consistent daily routine, ideally one that worked for you before the pandemic.
 - ❖ Keep a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time you did before COVID-19.
 - ❖ Take breaks from work to stretch, exercise, or check in with your supportive colleagues, coworkers, family, and friends.

- ❖ Spend time outdoors, either being physically active or relaxing.
 - ❖ If you work from home, set a regular time to end your work for the day, if possible.
 - ❖ Practice meditation, yoga, or exercise routines.
 - ❖ Do things you enjoy during non-work hours. Be creative if it involved hanging out with friends.
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting and mentally exhausting. It can increase your paranoia on a general level.
 - Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns, how you are feeling, or how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting you.
 - ❖ Connect with others through phone calls, email, text messages, mailing letters or cards, video chat, and social media.
 - ❖ Check on others. Helping others improves your sense of control, belonging, and self-esteem. Look for safe ways to offer social support to others, especially if they are showing signs of stress, depression or anxiety.
 - While maintaining social distancing (at least 6 feet), talk with your coworkers, supervisors, and employees about the job stress you are experiencing.
 - ❖ Identify things that cause stress and work together to identify solutions.
 - ❖ Talk openly with employers, employees, and supervisors about how the pandemic is affecting your work. Expectations should be communicated clearly by everyone.
 - ❖ Ask about how to access mental health resources if needed.
 - Identify those things which you do not have control over and do the best you can with the resources available to you.
 - Know the facts about COVID-19. Be informed about how to protect yourself and others. Understanding the risk and sharing accurate information with people you care about can reduce stress and help you make a connection with others.
 - Remind yourself that all of us has a crucial role in fighting this pandemic.
 - Remind yourself that everyone is in an unusual situation with limited resources.
 - If you feel you may be abusing alcohol or other drugs (including prescription drugs) as a means of coping, reach out for help.
 - If you are being treated for a mental health condition, continue with your treatment and be aware of any new or worsening symptoms.

**Taken from [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) on July 28, 2020.*

RESOURCES THAT YOU MAY USE FOR FURTHER HELP:

- Neuro Psychiatric Center (24 hour) – 713-970-7070
- Houston 24 Hour Crisis Hotline: 1-713-468-5463
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
- The Trevor Project (LGBTQ suicide help): 866-488-7386 (text 202-304-1200)
- Grief Recovery Helpline: 1-800-445-4808
- Alcohol and Drug Helpline: 1-800-821-HELP (4357)
- Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-784-2433
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255 (TTY: 800-799-4889)
- Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-8255, press 1
- Crisis Text Line: Text 741741, free 24/7

Community Providers

There are many websites that allow you to search for mental health providers based on your location and provider specialization.

- **Insurance Companies:** Look for a "provider data base" on your insurance's website
- **Psychology Today:** www.psychologytoday.com
- **American Psychological Association:** <https://locator.apa.org/>
- **Good Therapy:** www.goodtherapy.org
- **Therapy for Black Girls:** <https://therapyforblackgirls.com/>
- **Therapy for Black Men:** <https://therapyforblackmen.org/>
- **Therapy for Latinx:** <https://www.therapyforlatinx.com/>
- **Pride Counseling:** <https://www.pridecounseling.com/>
- **Gay and Lesbian Medical Association:**
https://glmainpak.networkats.com/members_online_new/members/dir_provider.asp

Articles

- [Mental Health and Coping](#)
- [Behavioral Health Tips for Social Distancing, Isolation, and Quarantine during Infectious Disease Outbreak](#)
- [Keeping your Distance to Stay Safe](#)
- [Parent and Caregiver guide to helping families cope with COVID-19](#)
- [American Psychological Association Pandemic Resources](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness- COVID-19 Information and Resources](#)
- [Talking to Kids about Coronavirus](#)
- [Guide to Well-Being During Coronavirus](#)
- [When Home becomes the Workplace: Mental Health and Remote Work](#)
- [Living with Mental Illness During COVID-19: Preparing your Wellness](#)
- [Mindfulness to help Coronavirus Panic](#)
- [Virtual Recovery Resources](#)
- [Toolkit for supporting children and youth with Autism spectrum concerns](#)
- [Helping Children Cope with Changes from COVID-19](#)
- [Beyond the Food Pantry: Supporting College Students during COVID-19](#)
- [NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topic](#)
- [CDC COVID-19](#)
- [cdc.gov/info](#)

The Board of Directors at One Delta Plaza Educational Center (ODPEC) pray that you stay safe, follow all guidelines for dealing with this unpredictable disease, and practice continuous self-care. We need you in our community.

