

Managing Stress During a Time of Crisis



A crisis can occur at any time, whether it's the result of a personal problem, a workplace incident or a larger societal issue like the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting stress from a crisis can put serious strain on workers, but certain steps can help manage this anxiety.

FACE THE CAUSE OF YOUR STRESS

The first step in managing stress is facing it. In stressful situations, it can be tempting to ignore the cause of our anxiety and focus on something else, but this only compounds the problem. Stress rarely goes away on its own, but focusing on the real cause of our anxiety gives us a chance to address it.

A crisis might have you taking on new tasks, looking after others or adding multiple responsibilities onto your already-full plate. This might be on top of health concerns you are dealing with, or worries about a family member or co-worker. To address the situation and keep yourself from feeling overwhelmed, focus on the smaller issues that you can control and build from there.

REACH OUT FOR ASSISTANCE

When managing your stress, take advantage of available resources whenever possible. At work, talk to your supervisor about managing additional job responsibilities or a human resources representative for more sensitive issues. Your workplace might offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with access to financial planners, counselors and other resources. Reach out to learn more about what is available to you and how to access these tools.

Outside of work, talk to a doctor, your loved ones or friends for additional support and guidance. No one needs to conquer a crisis alone; lean on others when you need help and provide assistance when others need it from you.

BE PROACTIVE

Ultimately, managing your stress during a crisis may require action, but the right steps will depend on your situation. If a crisis has you working from home and looking after your kids while trying to get your normal job done, talk to your supervisor about your options. Maybe you can work different hours or plan for certain breaks when you can focus on your kids, but you first have to identify the issue and talk it through.

If you are concerned about going into work or handling new job responsibilities during a crisis, voice these concerns to learn more about what precautions your organization is taking. If you are handling safety-sensitive tasks or learning new responsibilities, take your time and ensure you have the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The middle of a crisis is not the time for shortcuts, so follow the proper steps for every job and encourage your co-workers to do the same.

STAY HEALTHY

When dealing with stress, our physical and mental health can sometimes fall to the wayside. Focus on keeping your body and mind healthy to help manage your stress during a crisis.

- **Get at least seven hours of sleep each night**
- **Get some form of regular exercise, even if it's just taking walks before or after work**
- **Take regular breaks, including when working remotely**
- **Eat healthy meals**
- **Make time for activities you enjoy**
- **Avoid focusing on work once you are finished for the day**
- **Practice strong personal hygiene and take time off when sick**
- **Follow the recommendations of local health authorities**

No crisis or stressful situation is the same, but these steps can help ease anxieties in difficult times. Be sure to care properly for yourself so you can ensure the safety of those around you.

