

5 Strategies for Coping with Sustained Stress



1. Check in with yourself regularly

- The first step to managing stress is to **acknowledge it**
 - Ask yourself: **What am I feeling? How are my emotions? What is my stress level?**
- Make sure to add some **reflection time** to your daily breaks and transitions

2. If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed – breathe!

- Even a **few deep breaths** can have an **immediate calming effect** on your physical and mental state

3. Avoid feeding the misinformation beast

- Determine what sources will have the **vital, accurate information** you need (CDC, hospital communications, etc.)
- **Limit your time on other media**, as this can lead to increased anxiety, obsessing and doubt
- **Ignore or defuse gossip** - It can be easy to tune into gossip in times of high stress, but for everyone's well-being it is better to ignore, or politely redirect, gossipy conversations

4. Clarify things with your leaders

- Trying to do things **all on your own** can increase your stress
- **Don't be afraid to ask questions** if you need clarification or if you receive competing directions or information
- Determine when you should **escalate** an issue or **get help** from others

5. Be supportive

- Make it a habit to **check in with your co-workers** to see how they are doing. A sense of comradery contributes greatly to reducing stress.
- **Build coalitions** with people on other teams to make it easier to help each other

Adapted from **NCHARGE® Charge Nurse Fundamentals** and **CLiMB™ Tackle Stressful Situations**

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PURPOSE

Help your staff manage the chronic, ongoing stress that can accompany a health crisis like COVID-19. Share this tool and use the discussion questions below to engage your team members and provide a supportive space for discussion.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

1. Hand this tool out to individuals or to your team. Give them a few minutes to review the infographic.
2. Use these questions to prompt discussion and reflection:
 - Which coping strategies will be the most helpful for you?
 - Are there any other strategies you can use to help you cope with stress?
3. Consider discussing the following with your team:
 - Ask if you may clarify any questions or directions for the team regarding COVID-19. Discuss how to escalate specific issues.
 - Reinforce which sources staff should be tuning into for news and information (and how often they should be checking these sources).
 - Encourage staff to limit time on other media. Persuade them to give their mind a break from the virus news and spend some time on more pleasant or enjoyable distractions.
 - Discuss the ways staff can support each other, in addition to other teams.