

**PRIORITIZING
EMOTIONAL
STRENGTH DURING**

**DIFFICULT
TIMES**

Resources and support
to help you manage
the COVID-19 crisis.



YOUR PRESENTER MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL



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SEMINAR GOALS.

Understand and validate the challenges leaders experience on a daily basis.

Recognize mental health signs and symptoms associated with the COVID-19 crisis:

- Stress and anxiety
- Loneliness
- Grief

Practical strategies to help cope with daily stressors related to COVID-19 and beyond. Learn how to balance being pulled in different directions when working at home and having the family at home.

PLEASE RESPOND USING POLLING FEATURE

What has been the most difficult part of living through the pandemic?

- 1-Changes to work
- 2-Managing family and work demands
- 3-Financial
- 4-Stress, anxiety, loneliness or some other emotional health concern
- 5-Physical health

CHALLENGES OF A LEADER

VALIDATING THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Stress and anxiety

- Feeling overwhelmed with information (or lack thereof).
- Managing and reacting to high levels of stress and anxiety within the community.
- Dealing with ambiguity.

Loneliness

- Unable to engage with colleagues in a familiar way.
- Feeling isolated due to difficult decisions.
- Unable to share mutual expression of concern given job role.

Grief

- Difficult changes related to work environment.
- Sense of loss related to furloughs.
- Sense of responsibility for community hardships.

HOW TO IDENTIFY POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL ILLNESSES.*

- Unexplained physical symptoms
- Confused thinking
- Strong feelings of anger
- Feelings of extreme highs and lows
- Extreme worry
- Extreme sadness
- Substance use
- Social withdrawal

*Each illness has its own set of symptoms.

Sources: Mental Health America, 2018, Retrieved April 23, 2018 from <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/recognizing-warning-signs>

This material is provided for informational/educational purposes only. It is not intended as medical/clinical advice.



RECOGNIZING MENTAL HEALTH SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS: **UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND ANXIETY**

Our mental wellness can be impacted in many ways

- Life challenges and stressors affect each of us differently, but we can all struggle at times.
- Coping well with stressors can play a role in maintaining good physical and mental health.
- Being aware and supportive can make a big difference.



Stress is the psychological and physical response that results when a person's (actual or perceived) resources are not sufficient to cope with life's demands and pressures. It can be intensified by the feeling of having little support or control.

SETTING PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS: EVALUATE YOUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

WHAT DO I WANT TO BE DURING COVID-19?

FEAR ZONE

- Hoard food, toilet paper and medicines I don't need.
- I complain all the time.
- Transmit my anger and fear related emotions to others.
- Forward all messages to others.

LEARNING ZONE

- I stop compulsively consuming things that harm me, from food to news.
- I start letting go of things that are out of my control.
- I identify my emotions.
- I make myself aware of the situation and think about the best way to act.
- I verify information before I share it.
- I acknowledge everyone is trying their best.

GROWTH ZONE

- I find a purpose.
- I think of how I can help others.
- Use my skills to service the ones in need.
- I show empathy to myself and others.
- I live in the present and focus in the future.
- I keep myself emotionally happy and transmit hope.
- I show gratefulness.
- I find ways to adapt to changes.
- I practice calmness, patience relationships and creativity.

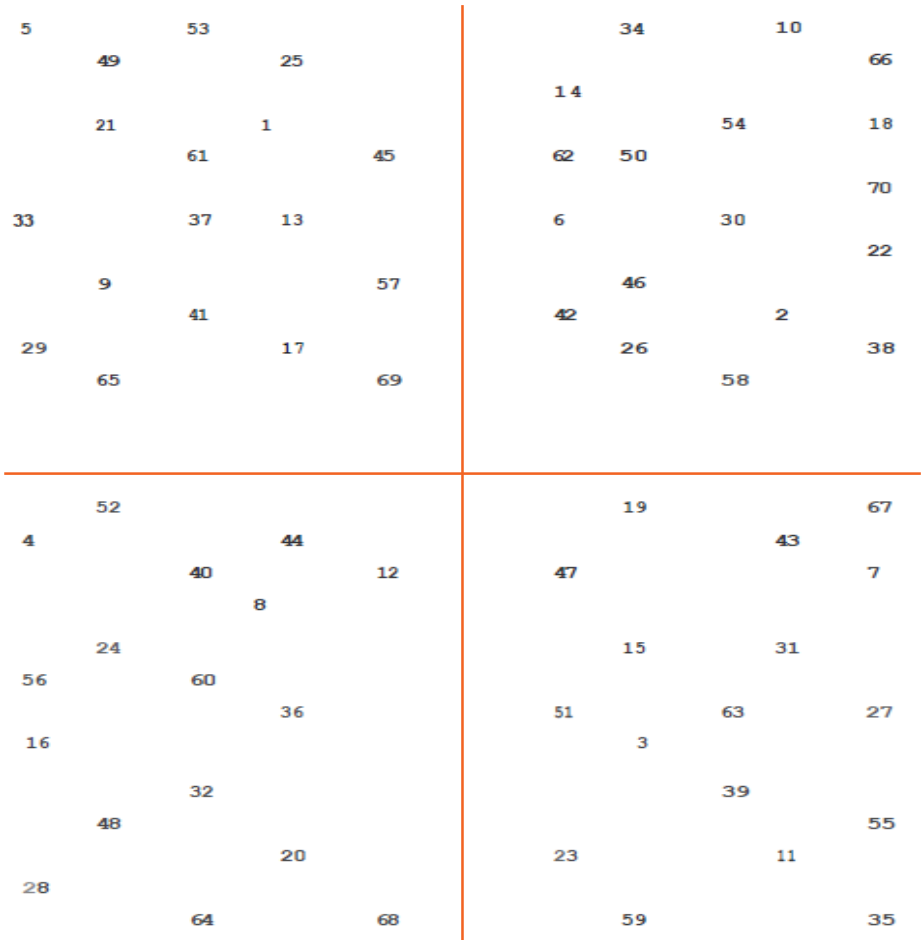
- Take a look at where we see ourselves and think about what we can do to get to the next zone.
- Understand that we can't control others or certain outcomes.
- Fixating on things we cannot control just adds to our fears.

A stress test

5		53				34		10	
	49		25						66
					14				
	21		1				54		18
		61		45	62	50			
									70
33		37	13		6		30		
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	9			57		46			
		41			42		2		
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4			44					43	
		40		12	47				7
			8						
	24					15		31	
56		60							
			36		51		63		27
16						3			
		32					39		
	48								55
			20		23			11	
28									
		64		68		59			35



Once again, with a plan



PLEASE RESPOND USING POLLING FEATURE

Did you improve on the 2nd test
when I gave you a plan?

1-yes

2-no

YOU NEED A PLAN TO CONTROL STRESS



Period of time
to unwind



Location
to de-stress



Activity
to enjoy



Name of someone
to talk to

Period.

Select a period of time every day to take a break from everyday tasks.

This will help you see things more objectively, ultimately allowing you to be more productive.

Suggestions:

- Instead of scrolling through social media, why not use your time to envision positive outcomes?
- To make your life less chaotic, try to wake up 10 minutes earlier, and use this time for something you enjoy.

Location.

Head to a location that's conducive to taking a break.

Suggestions:

- Going for a stroll can help you focus.
- Visit a nearby river or lake and find a relaxing spot to sit for a while.

Activity.

Choose an activity you enjoy that can help to relieve stress.

Suggestions:

- Reading a good book or joining a book club can be a positive distraction.
- Try cooking new, healthy recipes.
- Dancing, running, playing music – dive into these and other activities you think could be fun.

Name.

Name some people you can talk with who can help keep you from falling into negative thought patterns.

Suggestions:

- Speak with someone at work about setting boundaries and prioritizing to protect you from mounting pressures.
- Reach out to an old friend or family member you haven't spoken with in a while.

RECOGNIZING MENTAL HEALTH SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS: **UNDERSTANDING LONELINESS**

Our mental wellness can be impacted in many ways

- Having a “lack of balance” in one’s daily activities (doing too much or too little of any given thing).
- Can lead to poor physical and mental health.



Loneliness is a subjective feeling where one perceives a lack of social support and infrequent meaningful social interactions. May include negative feelings about one’s personal relationships.

COMBATING LONELINESS

EVERYONE CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

- Learn to recognize loneliness in yourself; reach out to families, friends and colleagues
- **Get to know your coworkers better**
- Find the work-life balance that's right for you
- Use technology to stay connected. Find creative ways to connect with others in fun and meaningful ways
- Take advantage of the health and wellness offerings



RECOGNIZING MENTAL HEALTH SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS: **UNDERSTANDING GRIEF**

Our mental wellness can be impacted in many ways

- People may become depressed or overly anxious during the grieving process.
- The stress of grieving can have an impact on health over time including sleeplessness and a weakened immune system.
- Grieving can have an impact on chronic conditions.



Grief is a natural response to the loss of someone - or something - very important to you. The loss may cause sadness and may cause you to think of very little else besides the loss. The words sorrow and heartache are often used to describe feelings of grief.

DEALING WITH GRIEF

PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION

- Give yourself grace as this is a new situation for us all
 - Grace is about acceptance, forgiveness and love
- Understand you are not alone
- Allow yourself to experience your emotions
- Reach out to a professional if symptoms persist too long



STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY.

DEVELOPING RESILIENCY IN OUR DAILY LIVES.

Physical

- Get adequate rest
- Exercise
- Eat healthy meals
- Participate in relaxing activities
- Take a break from social media

Emotional

- Reach out to people who care
- Shift your focus to yourself
- Structure your time
- Process/journal feelings
- Reach out to professional help

OVERCOMING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS CAN LEAD TO GROWTH

*Cigna unique provider data as of October 2019. **Per our agreement with contracted providers. This information is subject to change.



STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH FEAR OF COVID-19.

EDUCATE, MONITOR, FOCUS

Become educated and focus on valid news outlets.

Notice if fear becomes panic.
Limit exposure to news.

Focus on what you have control over – put the disease in context, and put your risk into perspective.



*U.S. Loneliness Index Report, Cigna, 2018.



STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY: MENTAL HEALTH

- Stay informed on new developments from reliable sources.
- Take note of what remains constant.
- Remind yourself of your abilities and strengths.
- Set short-term goals.



Plan something to
look forward to.

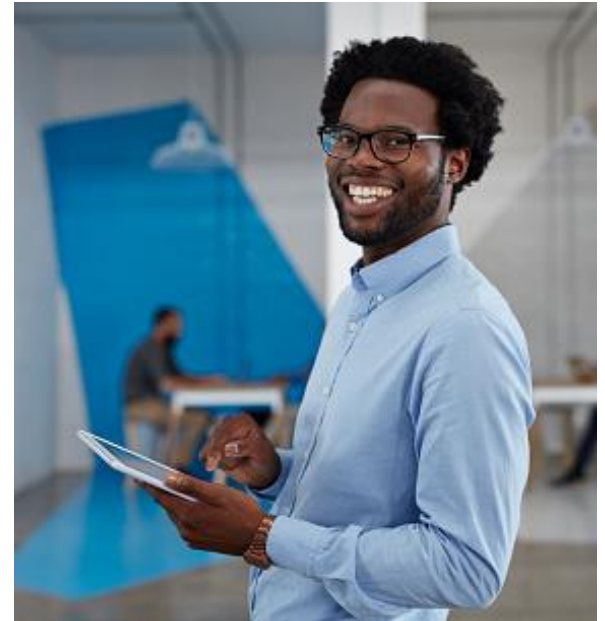
STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY: SHOW COMPASSION FOR YOURSELF.

- Let's acknowledge that we can feel different ways about the same situation, it doesn't have to be one or the other.
- All our feelings are valid and we can accept them.
- We need to stop saying I feel this way *but...* and start saying I feel this way *and...*



EXAMPLES OF STAYING CONNECTED WITH **SOCIAL DISTANCE GUIDELINES**

- Share pictures via texting
- Have a virtual coffee hour
- Take a virtual dance class
- Watch a movie together
- Write an email or letter
- Decorate driveways with chalk
- Start work meetings with sharing gratitude
- Theme video calls
- Sing on balconies at same time
- Neighborhood dance parties from safe distances
- Send messages of hope to essential employees
- Utilize EAP services



DID YOU KNOW? When employees feel that technology helps them make meaningful connections to coworkers, they are less lonely.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR WORKING FROM HOME

Family

Put together a schedule for children and communicate this with all members in the household.

Office Space

Be mindful of ergonomics.

Day to Day

- Dress for success.
- Set a schedule and organize your day.

STAYING BALANCED WHILE JUGGLING MANY ROLES.

Focus on one task at a time.

Use all resources to find your rhythm.

Bookend the day with routines.

Set realistic goals.

Counterbalance social isolation with making meaningful connections.



*U.S. Loneliness Index Report, Cigna, 2018.



RETURNING TO WORK

Continued impact as precautions are lifted:

- Ongoing changes and updates
- Continued uncertainties
- Development of new routines and new sense of normalcy



I wonder if it's safe to go back to the office?

How am I going to social distance?

I just got used to working from home...

PREPARING FOR CHANGES

- Stay informed of new updates
- Continue to follow safety recommendations to protect yourself
- Set realistic expectations for yourself and others
- Talk to your staff about concerns
- Tap into resources to get support



*Each illness has its own set of symptoms.

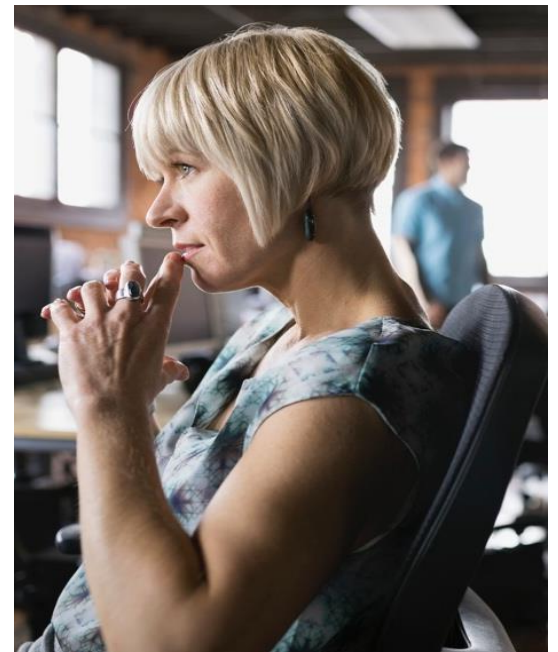
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TRANSITIONING TO **THE WORKPLACE**

- Recognize that things may not be the same as they were
- Understand that each individual may have their own unique safety concerns
- Plan time to catch up with your co-workers
- Prioritize self care



Tap into your natural resiliency

- You have overcome challenges already.
- Ask yourself: How have I successfully managed before?

Source: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress.aspx>, September 2019.



CIGNA'S COVID-19 RESOURCE CENTER

Find the latest resources and information to help you navigate the Coronavirus during this time of uncertainty.

Visit and share our coronavirus website:
Cigna.com/COVID19

Information for Employers and Brokers:
Cigna.com/coronavirus/employers



STRATEGIES FOR WORKING FROM HOME: KEEP A GRATEFUL HEART

Yes, you can do hard things. But you can't do *impossible* things. Like homeschool your kids, work, cook healthy meals, keep a clean house, and maintain your sanity. There will be lots of failures each day. That's okay. Just try to keep a grateful heart... *and keep going.* ~ Angela Anagnost-Repke, writer

Q&A



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