



Normalizing Stress Reactions in Times of Crisis

During this time of crisis, health care professionals are experiencing profound pressure to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible while also providing critical treatment to those who need it.

Traumatic stress reactions among health care professionals during this time of heightened burden and higher-than-usual stakes are both common and understandable.

Trauma is:

- an **EVENT**, series of events or set of circumstances that...
- is **EXPERIENCED** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening;
- and has lasting, adverse **EFFECTS** on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.

While reactions to trauma can vary, here are some signs and symptoms that are common:

Physical

- Headaches or backaches
- Muscle tension and stiffness
- Insomnia
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, dizziness
- Vivid dreaming
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Weight gain or loss
- Skin breakouts
- Increased susceptibility to illness
- Decreased libido

Emotional

- Mood swings
- Agitation or restlessness
- Irritability or numbness
- Impatience
- Excessive tension
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling isolated
- Feeling misunderstood
- Feeling guilty or helpless
- Feeling fear, anxiety or self-doubt

Behavioral

- Avoiding people, places or things that may trigger memories of the event
- Tendency toward isolation
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Overreacting to unexpected problems
- Procrastination
- Displaced anger and feelings of inadequacy
- Obsessive behavior
- Over or under eating
- Increased alcohol, cigarette or drug use

Cognitive

- Amnesia of the event
- Forgetfulness or short-term memory loss
- Difficulty making decisions
- Decreased levels of judgment and insight
- Inability to concentrate
- Increased negative thoughts
- Racing thoughts

If you notice that you're experiencing these reactions, please reach out to the following resources for support:

- **Ohio State Stress, Trauma and Resilience (STAR) Line: (614) 293-STAR (7827)**
This line is staffed 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you're calling outside of these hours, please leave a message with your name and number or preferred contact method, and we'll respond within 24 hours.
- **OSU EAP: (800) 678-6265**
<https://osuhealthplan.com/eap>