

Self-care for NHS staff during COVID-19



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Caerdydd a'r Fro
Cardiff and Vale
University Health Board

- Most importantly, this is unprecedented: It is okay to not be okay
- Seek information updates at specific times during the day, once or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports can cause anyone to feel worried. Get the facts at phw.nhs.wales/coronavirus or www.gov.uk/coronavirus
- Feeling stressed is an experience that you and many of your colleagues are likely going through. It is quite normal to be feeling this way in the current situation. Stress and the feelings associated with it are by no means a reflection that you cannot do your job or that you are weak.
- Managing your stress and psychosocial wellbeing during this time is as important as managing your physical health.
- Take care of your basic needs and ensure rest and respite during work or between shifts, eat sufficient and healthy food, engage in physical activity, and stay in contact with family and friends.
- This is an unprecedented scenario, don't try to learn new strategies, use the ones that you have used in the past to manage times of stress.
- This is likely to be a marathon - pace yourself.
- Consider your psychological energy levels- you will need to "fill up" after "emptying the tank"
- Be aware of your "bandwidth"- it might take longer to think things through and make sense of things if you are feeling overwhelmed
- STOP, BREATHE, then THINK- slowing the breath slows the stress cycle and re-engages your frontal lobes - then you can think.
- Avoid using unhelpful coping strategies such as tobacco, alcohol or other drugs.
- Some workers may unfortunately experience avoidance by their family or community due to stigma or fear. If possible, staying connected with your loved ones including through digital methods is one way to maintain contact. Turn to your colleagues or team leader for social support - your colleagues may be having similar experiences to you.
- Beware of using dramatic language that might panic your colleagues.

Collated by Dr Julie Highfield, Consultant Clinical Psychologist.