

## Why have I been given this leaflet?

We would like to make sure that you are all aware of the personal reactions that may be experienced as a result of difficult, stressful and traumatic circumstances at work. We hope to help you to recognise potential difficulties, both in yourself and in others, so that you can make use of the support available in the organisation if required.

## Prolonged Stress and Traumatic Events

There are some common reactions that people can experience as a result of being involved in prolonged stressful and traumatic situations. These reactions may not affect all of you, however, it is not uncommon to feel quite disturbed by things that have happened, or that you have witnessed. If you are having difficulties, this is understandable, expected and normal, and please come forward so we can help.

## Stress Reactions

Sometimes stress reactions appear immediately; however other times it may take time (days, weeks or even months) for them to emerge. While not everyone will notice their own distress, it is not uncommon for people who know you well (such as family, colleagues or friends) to recognise that you are behaving differently.

## Seeking Help

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last days, weeks, months and occasionally longer.

With understanding and support from your colleagues and your family and friends, stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Sometimes, additional help may be of benefit.

You will find self-help information on the **NCIC Intranet Health and Wellbeing pages**.

There is additional help available to you, but it can be confusing to know which help to access, and where to access it from. For this reason, we have set up a **Staff Wellbeing Network**, through which you can speak with someone who will help direct you to the best sources of support for you.

**Staff Wellbeing Network: ☎ 0800 633 55 47**  
Open Monday to Friday 9.00 – 17.00  
[staffwellbeingnetwork@ncic.nhs.uk](mailto:staffwellbeingnetwork@ncic.nhs.uk)



You can also access the **Occupational Health Department**

### Remember:

**Needing additional help does not imply poor coping or weakness. In fact getting help is a sign that you are taking your health seriously. Keeping yourself emotionally healthy is as important as keeping yourself physically healthy.**

## Common Stress related symptoms

### Physical

- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Muscle tremors
- Twitches
- Chest pains \*\*
- Difficulty breathing
- Increased blood pressure
- Rapid heart rate \*\*
- Thirst
- Headaches \*\*
- Visual difficulties \*\*
- Vomiting
- Grinding teeth
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Profuse sweating
- Chills
- Shock \*\*
- Fainting \*\*

### Emotional

- Anxiety
- Guilt/Denial
- Grief
- Loss of emotional control
- Severe panic (rare)
- Fear/Uncertainty
- Depression
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Intense anger
- Irritability
- Being extra vigilant
- Flashbacks

### Thoughts

- Blaming yourself or someone
- Confusion
- Poor attention
- Poor decisions
- Heightened or lowered awareness
- Poor concentration
- Difficulty identifying familiar things or people
- Poor problem solving
- Loss of person, place or time orientation
- Disturbed thinking
- Nightmares

### Behavioural

- Change in activity
- Change in speech
- Withdrawal
- Emotional outbursts
- Suspiciousness
- Poor communication
- Increased alcohol intake
- Inability to rest
- Antisocial acts
- Intensified startle reflex
- Pacing
- Erratic movements
- Agitations
- Apprehension

**\*\* These symptoms may indicate a need for medical evaluation by a General Practitioner (GP)**

## Some helpful hints for you

- Remember the basics – keep hydrated and remember to eat.
- Encourage each other to take breaks, and don't forget to have toilet breaks on shift.
- Maintain/re-establish as normal a routine as possible
- Keep in touch, however possible with friends, family and people you trust
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even when you don't feel like it).
- Try to keep a reasonable level of activity (exercise is good for your mental health)
- Try not to bottle things up; express your feelings as they arise to people that you trust. But remember, you don't have to tell everyone everything.
- Try not to use alcohol as a crutch

## Helpful hints for family, friends & colleagues

- Listen carefully, don't try and solve every issue which emerges. Just listening helps.
- Spend time with the person.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear even if they have not asked for help.
- Reassure them but do not force them to talk.
- Help them with every day or routine tasks – it may take time for them to readjust.

- Allow them some private time.
- Tell them that you want to understand and assist them as and when they would like you to.
- Encourage the person to seek additional help if difficulties continue.

The advice in this leaflet is relevant to you if you are suffering as a result of prolonged stress, type 1 trauma (exposure to a single 'major' traumatic incident) or type 2 trauma (repeated 'smaller' traumatic incidents). Type 2 traumas can have an insidious effect with deterioration in mental health occurring over a period of time, rather than 'all of a sudden' reaction which can follow type 1 traumas.

Speak to friends, family or colleagues. It is worth remembering that most people recover from a traumatic episode and it is important to take each day as it comes.

Getting back to whatever was normal for you before the traumatic event is also important as is gently beginning to focus on what you are going to do next. However, if you feel distressed or are having problems getting through each day after four weeks or so, don't be afraid to ask for help.

A place to note any of your own useful contact numbers:

# Managing Your Wellbeing During COVID



**A guide for you, your family and friends**

