In This Together

On the Front Lines of Supporting Your Team

## As we adjust to working under the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19 (commonly known as coronavirus), it’s more important than ever for you to support your team. Your employees might be struggling to balance work and child care, working from home for the first time or experiencing any number of other issues. As their direct manager, you’re in a position to help.

# Supporting your employees

As your team members navigate these new situations, it is important to acknowledge their feelings, which may include a sense of loss, grief, fear or anxiety. Support your team by:

* Having weekly team meetings, huddles or check-ins, as well as individual one-on-ones
* Thanking your team frequently for their hard work
* Rescheduling non-critical meetings and being available for your team as much as possible
* Having open conversations about employees’ need for flexibility
* If your team is working virtually, using online tools (such as video conferencing, chat, instant messaging and email) to stay in touch

# How to communicate

Ambiguity and uncertainty increases stress, so it’s important to communicate with your team more frequently than usual. Practice the following:

* Always communicate openly and honestly
* Be transparent about what you know and what you don’t know
* Respond to questions and concerns
* Be sensitive and empathetic in the language you use (use person-centered, “you” language)

# Signs of stress

In these uncertain times, it’s important to both manage your own stress as well as be mindful of increased stress in your employees. Signs of heightened stress include:

* **Physical:** rapid heart rate, muscle tension, headaches, gastrointestinal distress, trouble sleeping
* **Emotional:** strong negative feelings, fear, anger, irritability, deep sadness, difficulty maintaining emotional balance
* **Mental:** difficulty thinking clearly, confusion, memory issues, misinterpretation of language and situations
* **Behavioral:** risk-taking, refusal to follow direction, endangerment of self or others, increased use or misuse of alcohol or drugs
* **Social:** hostility toward others, inability to support teammates, conflicts with peers, withdrawal or isolation

You should also be mindful of employees working from home outside of business hours (when inappropriate), being unable to unplug from work and burning themselves out.





# Self-care

To help manage stress, you and your employees can follow these simple tips:

* Eat nutritiously
* Stay virtually connected with family, friends or other social supports
* Get enough rest
* Reduce physical tension through exercise, meditation, deep breathing, etc.
* Use your downtime for activities that refresh you, such as reading, listening to music or doing your favorite hobby
* Limit your news consumption
* Talk with your colleagues about your feelings and how you are coping

# Resources

One of the best ways to help an employee in need is to be prepared with tools that can help. The following are some of the resources available for you and your team:

* Company information about the COVID-19 pandemic: [INSERT LINK]
* Employee Assistance Program (EAP): [INSERT WEB AND/OR PHONE] (Note: the EAP is available to all employees and their families at no cost)
* Examples of online resources for support:
  + [www.dailystrength.org](http://www.dailystrength.org) (online support groups)
  + [www.headspace.com/covid-19](http://www.headspace.com/covid-19) (mindfulness and meditation)
  + [www.thetappingsolution.com](http://www.thetappingsolution.com/) (meditation app with COVID-19 programs)
  + [nami.org/covid-19](https://nami.org/covid-19) (National Alliance on Mental Illness COVID-19 resources)
* Crisis hotlines:
  + Suicide Hotline: 800-273-8255 | [suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/)
  + Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233 | [www.thehotline.org/help](http://www.thehotline.org/help/)
  + Substance Abuse and Mental Health Helpline: 800-662-4357 | [www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline](http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline)
* [insert any additional company and/or local resources]

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