

How to Use This Plan:

Being resilient starts with a commitment to taking care of yourself. This can be increasingly difficult during a pandemic, where there are additional stressors related to home and personal circumstances as well as those brought on by challenging demands at UC sites. There are important steps you can take to keep yourself healthy and fit for duty as you take care of others. Complete this self-care plan before your UC site assignment and keep it with you so that you are ready to apply coping strategies when things get tough.

Additional Resources:

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

These centers provide confidential crisis counseling and mental health referrals. For support call 988.

SAMHSA DISASTER DISTRESS HELPLINE

This helpline provides 24 / 7 / 365 crisis counseling and support by calling 1-800-985-5990 or texting "TalkWithUs" to 66746

SAMHSA BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DISASTER RESPONSE MOBILE APP

Use this app to access field resources on aiding survivors, search for behavioral health service providers in the impacted area, review emergency preparedness materials, and send resources to colleagues.

Emergency Responder Self-Care Plan: Behavioral Health PPE for UC Detailees

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Name of UC Site(s) and Assignment Date(s):

PREDICT PROBLEMS

As an emergency responder, you and your team are at risk of experiencing a traumatic incident— an incident that may involve exposure to catastrophic events and emotionally or physically challenging situations like those listed below. Check all exposure elements you predict might be associated with your current/upcoming deployment:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Short notice/limited time to prepare | <input type="checkbox"/> Language barriers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intense workloads/long hours | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with difficult supervisors/colleagues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of time off for personal time | <input type="checkbox"/> Separation from loved ones/social support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Austere living conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Hostile environment/risk of personal harm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in roles/ responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing survivors' traumatic experiences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Media criticism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PPE-related challenges | <input type="checkbox"/> Life-and-death decision making |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Risk of exposing self or others to COVID-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> Limited communications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Encountering unfamiliar cultures/populations | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of colleagues |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing conflicting messaging or changing guidance |

Everyone reacts differently to stressful exposures, particularly when an event reminds them of a past event or when the stress is prolonged. **In the box below, list a few things that are traumatic reminders or emotional "triggers" for you personally?** Examples...sights/sounds, places, smells, people, times of day/situations, feelings.

PRESCRIBE PROTECTION

Given the problems you have predicted, **consider what you *can* do, think, and avoid to help you stay fit for duty using the box below.** Review, adapt, and practice this “prescription for protection” during and after your deployment or any particularly distressing or traumatic work shift.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What do you do for yourself when you are upset?
- What has helped you previously during stressful times?
- What do you like to do when you’re in a good mood or to help you relax?
- Where do you have control to make things better?
- What positive things can you say to yourself when things are tough?
- What/whom should you avoid?

STRESS MANAGEMENT TIPS:

- Limit work to no longer than 12-hour shifts in teams
- Limit news/media exposure
- Talk to family, friends, and teammates about your feelings
- Maintain a healthy diet, get adequate sleep, and exercise
- Remember it is ok to say “no”
- Remind yourself it is not selfish to take breaks...and take them
- Name 5 non-distressing objects around you
- Pace yourself
- Watch out for each other
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Recognize what you can change and accept what you cannot
- Use structured meditation or breathing techniques to relax
- Practice yoga or Progressive Muscle relaxation techniques
- Listen to music you enjoy
- Avoid excessive alcohol/caffeine/sugar/negative people
- Use “positive” self-talk and avoid self-criticism
- Explore digital apps (e.g., COVID COACH)

ENGAGE YOUR PLAN

Recognize your personal signs of stress and monitor them throughout deployment so you know when to engage your protection plan. Prolonged exposure to stress can cause new symptoms, which can be more difficult to recognize. Common symptoms of stress include:

- Sadness, depression, apathy
- Easily frustrated
- Blaming others, irritability
- Lacking feelings, indifference
- Isolation or disconnection
- Poor self-care

- Tired, exhausted or overwhelmed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling like a failure, nothing you do will help, not doing job well, need alcohol/drugs to cope
- Excessive worry or fear about something bad happening
- Easily startled or “on guard” all the time
- Nightmares or recurrent thoughts of traumatic event
- Feeling other’s trauma is yours
- Physical signs of stress (e.g. racing heart, chest pain, difficulty breathing) *seek medical care

REMEMBER THE BUDDY SYSTEM TO ENGAGE

Create a team culture and buddy system to provide peer support. Remember you may be able to see the signs of stress better in your teammates than in yourself. In a buddy system, two responders partner together to support each other and monitor each other’s stress, workload, safety.

BUDDY’S NAME:

CONTACT NUMBER:

OTHER PEOPLE I CAN CONTACT IF I NEED SUPPORT:

MY ORGANIZATION’S EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) CONTACT INFORMATION:

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID:

Offer peer support and practical assistance to teammates using the *Look-Listen-Link model*. It is important to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to supporting your colleagues during deployment. For additional ways to address a mental health concern, visit [Mental Health First Aid USA](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/).

Remember that your role is not to diagnose someone or solve the problem, but instead to provide support and information.

LOOK:

- LOOK for safety issues.
- LOOK for people with obvious urgent basic needs. LOOK for serious distress reactions.
 - Is anyone extremely upset, immobile, not responding to others, or in shock?
 - Where and who are the most distressed people?

LISTEN:

- Approach people who may need support
 - Introduce yourself by name and organization; ask about immediate needs
 - If possible, find a quiet & safe place to talk; respect privacy
- LISTEN to find out about people's needs and concerns
 - Ask about any obvious needs & concerns
 - Find out what is most important to them; help them prioritize
- LISTENING will help people feel calm
 - Remain calm, quiet, and available
 - Do not pressure a person to talk; offer to listen and standby

LINK:

- LINK people to services and help address basic needs
 - Provide water, food, shelter, etc. and link people to available services for needs
 - Follow up with people if you promise to do so
- Help people cope with problems
 - Help people identify their most urgent practical needs and prioritize them
 - Ask how they coped with past difficulties and affirm their ability to cope now
- LINK people to information
 - Only say what you know
 - Provide people with contact details or direct referral to at least one other person they can go to once your assistance has ended.
 - Do not leave people who are seriously distressed or who cannot take care of themselves alone.