

SUPPORTING PEERS

As a peer in the behavioral health network, you are likely experiencing challenges during the COVID-19 outbreak at a different level than your colleagues. The world may feel upside down. This may include a heightened sense of "fight, flight or freeze" based on:

- Past trauma and PTSD,
- Concern for your health and the health of your family,
- Stigma from the greater community,
- Uncertainty about how the outbreak will impact you socially and economically, and
- Managing the distress of people you support in your professional life.

The way peers in the behavioral health community have responded to the reality of COVID-19 is impressive. Whether in the Clubhouse community, drop-in centers, Veteran navigators or recovery coaches, the resiliency, passion and dedication to continue to provide services is awe inspiring.

Many frontline behavioral health providers are experiencing increased depression, anxiety, insomnia, and stress. You are not alone in these feelings and there are resources to help. Despite restrictions in place for physical distancing, it is important to remain connected in accordance with CDC and MDHHS guidelines. This often includes virtual communications.

Common reactions and behavioral responses to be aware of in yourself and your peers:

Distress Reactions

- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Scapegoating
- Decreased perception of safety

High Risk Behaviors

- Increased use of tobacco/alcohol
- Altered work/life balance
- Social isolation
- Family conflict
- Violence

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



Additional Resources

Individuals in crisis or considering suicide are urged to contact:

Disaster Distress Helpline:
800-985-5990 | 24/7

Certified Peer Support Warm Line:
888-733-7753 | Daily 10 a.m. - 2 a.m.

Supporting Emotional Health of the Behavioral Health Workforce:
michigan.gov/documents/coronavirus/Behavioral_Health_Workers_Final_685877_7.pdf

COVID-19 Mental Health Resource Hub: psychhub.com/covid-19

Depression and BiPolar Support Alliance: dbsalliance.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness: nami.org/covid-19

National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: ptsd.va.gov

Being on the front line of this pandemic has shown that peers are ready and willing to stand up to this crisis. Know you are not alone. It is important to recognize stress in yourself as it starts to build to stay healthy and to take time for your own self-care.



Follow Healthy Routines

Routines can help you feel more in control. This may be as simple as making your bed, getting dressed, practicing good hygiene, and eating nutritious foods.



Maintain A Sense Of Community

This may include creating small families to virtually connect with on a regular basis; seek support from family, friends, mentors, sponsors, and others in similar circumstances.



Recognize When You Need A Break

Whether it is burnout or compassion fatigue, resilience is the ability to adapt successfully in the face of trauma, adversity, tragedy or significant threat.



Draw On Your Resilience

You may not have experienced this specific event before (almost no one in our lifetime has), but you have weathered other storms and adversity to get where you are today. Take some time to assess what helped you during those times; draw on past experience and strength.



Cultivate Calm

Try techniques like meditation, steady deep breathing, stretching, exercise, taking a walk outside, yoga, etc. If you find watching the news is creating more stress, limit your exposure to a few minutes at a specific time of day.



Improve Sense Of Control

Accept there are some circumstances that cannot be changed, and focus on what you can alter. Identify trigger points and make a wellness plan for dealing with feelings.

