7 Evidence-based Tools for Frontline Staff

This guide is a summary of tools that can support your health and wellbeing whilst working with patients with COVID-19 and during other periods of exceptionally high stress.

1 Operational Training & Preparedness

Be sure to be up to speed and on board with your organisation's training and protocols for responding to COVID-19. If you are working in areas that extend beyond your level of expertise, where possible, ask to be paired with an experienced colleague.

2 Plan Ahead

Before a shift (if possible, the day before) plan when and how you will incorporate brief breaks into your day where you do something enjoyable, such as visiting your hospital's wellbeing hub, getting out of the hospital or station to walk, watching a YouTube video or trying a 7 min exercise with an app like Wahoo.

3 Care for yourself: Rest, Nutrition, Compassion

Taking care of yourself is vital for your own immunity and your capacity to care for others. Ensure the basics: breaks, rest, nutrition. Be sure to manage your sleep and schedule time out to rest. Take days off. Extend the compassion you offer others to yourself. It is okay to not be okay and to ask for support.

4 Exercise

A full workout is unlikely to be possible most days. But short bursts of exercise may be manageable. An app like Wahoo or Quick Fit will help you with 7 mins of exercise. On days off or after shifts, engage in longer bouts of exercise, such as going for a walk, a run or streaming a live Yoga or circuits class.

5 Deal with Unwanted Memories

Past traumatic events can sometimes intrude onto the way we see what happens in the present. This is normal. Try to let such memories come and go (rather than suppress them) and use Then vs Now to break the link between the past and the present. Intentionally spot the differences between what is actually happening *now* and the past *then*.

6 Disengage from Over-Thinking

You may understandably find yourself dwelling about what has happened on shifts. Spot when your thoughts have turned to 'why' 'what if' and 'if only.' Use the awareness as a cue to shift your focus away from dwelling. If you spot feelings of guilt, focus on what you would say to someone else if they were in your shoes, all that you have done that has been helpful during the COVID-19 response and how grateful the wider population feels about our frontline workers.

7 Use feeling overwhelmed as a cue to accept help

Spot signs of burnout (feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, tearful, or flat) as a cue to accept a helping hand. Experiment with reaching out to colleagues, friends or organisations for support. The Ambulance Staff Charity (www.theask.org.uk) and The Intensive Care Society (www.ics.ac.uk) are a few of the many organisations available to help.

For more information and the evidence supporting these tools, visit www.oxcadatresources.com

Created by The Oxford Centre for Anxiety Disorders & Trauma
2 April 2020 v1