



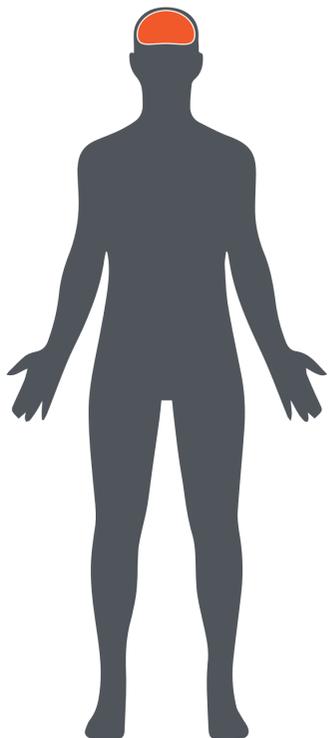
NORMAL STRESS RESPONSE

You have been living through a unique experience. Hopefully you have felt safe and in good hands. Given the novelty and duration of these circumstances it is reasonable to consider the normal effects that you could likely be experiencing.

During these weeks there have been many changes to your everyday priorities and habits. We are creatures of habit and put forth much less energy for daily living when able to live with the familiar. The cumulative effect of weeks of the changes you've experienced is to be expected.

The normal impact of such disruption to daily living brings changes within our body and mind that allow us to rally in meeting these changes in our circumstance and environment. Factors such as changes in weather, location, noise, crowds, demand openness of mind, problem solving and adapting. Our internal response will meet the demands of external changes for a relatively short period of time. And, we all have different capacities to incorporate these changes. Some find this more difficult than others.

As the days and weeks wear on with the continuing need to adapt, you will experience general fatigue simply from meeting these ongoing challenges. Stored sugars, fats and chemicals are released including stress hormones to assist us in meeting the ongoing impact of these changes. The resulting effects on the body and mind are part of this effort to cope including the following;



BODY
• Increased restlessness
• Light sleep (longer onset time, disrupted quality, waking earlier)
• Lethargy
• Headaches
• Decrease in appetite and efficiency in digestion
• General fatigue
• Dry mouth
• Muscle aches

MIND
• Irritability/reactivity
• Decrease in focus, attention, short term memory, comprehension
• Distressing dreams
• Restricted mood
• Anxiety
• Depression
• Emotional swings

Upon returning to normal living, these stress response indicators should dissipate. However, should any or all of these symptoms persist, contact your family physician and/or licensed mental health professional. Remember that your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free and accessible resource for you. Connecting with family, friends or faith based services could also be beneficial.

Prioritize your self-care, such as regular sleep patterns, fresh air and exercise, lots of water, healthy eating and socializing (in-person or virtually). Below is a more extensive self-care guide for you to consult, which will ensure that you are taking time for yourself to do and enjoy things that make you feel good. Each letter below represents an important element of SELF-CARE:

S	Sleep	When our minds and bodies are well rested and recharged, it grants us the ability to perform at our best and to think clearly. When we take the time to get a good sleep, we invest in our waking hours since we are more alert, happy, and ready to tackle the day.
E	Exercise	Exercise strengthens our body and mind. When we seek to make exercise a habit in our everyday lives, engaging in even 20 minutes of exercise a day, such as walking or practicing yoga, goes a long way for our physical and mental health.
L	Liquids	The role played by water in physiological processes cannot be overstated. Consequences of not drinking enough water includes lower concentration capacity, headache, slower metabolism, and irritability. When dehydrated, we cannot perform at the level we need to.
F	Food	Eating enough of the right food nourishes the body and keeps the mind sharp. When we eat healthy and when we eat enough (but not too much), we provide our mind and body the energy it needs to push us towards our goals and accomplish the tasks of daily life.
C	Care	Care comes in many different forms depending on the person, but all of us need to engage in methods of care on a daily basis. Taking time for regular care protects against things like burnout, fatigue and many other negative outcomes.
A	Attitude	The more mindful of the attitudes we hold and the more conscious of the feelings we have, the easier it is to maintain a positive attitude. The more positive we are, the happier we will be and the healthier our interactions with others will become.
R	Relaxation	Relaxation is something we should engage in everyday; not just on the weekends. Even if it means taking 15 minutes to sit quietly and just be, not checking our phones in the evening or driving home with your favorite music playing, we must ensure we let our minds rest.
E	Evaluation	Evaluation of self means that we reflect on our performance in our day-to-day life and how we react under stress compared to when we are in good mental health. This leads to us making changes, but also celebrate the progress that we have made, no matter how small.

TRY THIS SIMPLE STRESS REDUCING TECHNIQUE CALLED 'DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING.'

Each day, upon arising and when retiring:

Sit or lay down. Relax your muscles, particularly your shoulders

Inhale through the nostrils / exhale through the mouth

Using your abdominal muscles (and not your chest),

Take a deep breath to a count of six, hold for a count of 3, exhale to count of six, hold for a count of 3

Repeat slowly and consciously for 5 minutes.