



# Improving First Responder Well-Being During the Covid-19 Outbreak

Stress can be intense during a pandemic. Fear about the safety and wellbeing for yourself, your coworkers, your family and friends, or those you serve can cause you to experience new or increased stress reactions. You can mitigate those reactions and increase your wellbeing and effectiveness on the job by picking a few of the following actions that work best for you:

## *Increase Your Sense of Safety*

- Focus on what you can control to increase your safety. Use all safety precautions put in place for you at work (and for your families at home).
- Increase any healthy actions that make you feel safer.
- Seek out accurate information from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).
- Seek mentoring to assist in making decisions.
- Use a buddy system to check in and take care of each other.
- Step up your self-monitoring and pacing so as not to over-work and burn out.
- Take brief breaks for basic physical care and refreshment.
- Make plans for what will happen if someone in the home or your work unit becomes ill or if quarantine or shelter-in-place measures are ordered.

## *Stay Connected*

- Consider it crucial to connect more with co-workers, leaders, family, friends, or mentors.
- Prioritize making time for those who can help with problem-solving, decision-making, resource sharing, and mutual support.
- Be creative in connecting via phone, email, text messaging, and video calls.
- Brainstorm ways to be together while keeping appropriate social distancing, eating meals with another responder, work out together, etc.

## *Find Ways to be More Calm*

- Realize that it is understandable to feel anxious and worried about what may happen.
- Try to reduce or distract yourself from your own negative self-talk whenever possible.
- Reduce news-checking if it increases your stress, particularly prior to sleep.
- Prioritize stress management and be more diligent about using anything that has worked. Practice slow, steady breathing and muscle relaxation, as well as any other actions that are calming for you (yoga, exercise, music, staying busy, keeping the mind occupied).



### *Improve Your Sense of Control and Competence*

- Get trained in work skills that will make you feel more competent in this context.
- Give yourself a break if you make mistakes because the context is unprecedented.
- Accept circumstances that cannot be changed and focus on what you can alter.
- Modify your definition of a “good day” to meet the current reality as a challenge.
- Try to brainstorm solutions to new problems and set achievable goals.
- Increase positive coping behaviors that have worked in the past.

### *Remain Hopeful*

- Consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.
- Look for opportunities to see the situation as an opportunity to learn or build strengths.
- Acknowledge successes, and take satisfaction in completing tasks, even small ones.
- Find things to be grateful about.
- Draw upon your spirituality, those who inspire you, or your personal beliefs and values.