

MANAGING CHRONIC COVID-19 STRESS

As we move through the COVID-19 Pandemic; symptoms of prolonged, chronic stress may be seen in ourselves and those around us. We hear a dizzying array of questions and concerns daily. The concerns are real and the need to stay connected to others is strong and necessary. Some of the concerns Arkansas Employee Assistance clinicians have heard are listed below:

*Will I be diagnosed with COVID-19?
Will a loved one contract COVID-19?
If I or a loved one have COVID-19, what will the long term effects be?
Should I send my children to school?
I lost my job.
What if I lose my job?
What if my spouse, partner or other family member loses their job?
I can't pay my bills.*

*I'm afraid to leave my home, because some people won't wear masks to protect themselves or others.
I can't sleep.
I'm eating too much/not enough.
I'm drinking more alcohol than usual.
I'm irritable with myself and those around me.
I can't concentrate.
I want life to be "normal" again.
The list goes on...*

WHAT CAN WE DO TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 STRESS?

- Take a social media break, especially before bed.
- Stay physically active: go for a walk, run, exercise, garden, etc.
- Talk to a loved one in person (if able) or by phone, FaceTime, Zoom...
- Journal your experience.
- Focus on the positive and practice empathy – check on a neighbor, reach out safely to others.
- Reduce alcohol use.
- Start/keep a regular sleep schedule.
- Read a book, play a game, work a puzzle.
- Practice patience when a family member or friend is experiencing stress or anxiety
- Make a list of what you can and cannot control at this time.
- If needed, give yourself a time out.



PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING/MEDITATION/PRAYER

APPS TO EXPLORE: Breethe: Meditation & Sleep, Breathe2Relax, Headspace, Breathe – Pranayama Trainer, Calm, Mindfulness, IntelliCare.

ALWAYS KNOW THAT ARKANSAS EAP IS HERE TO SUPPORT YOU
Call **1.800.542.6021** to make your **confidential** appointment with an **EAP** counselor

REMEMBER - You are not alone. Everyone is feeling the effects of the pandemic. Remember – It's normal to feel anxious or stressed at times; it's how you manage and respond that is important! Remind yourself: "I am resilient, resourceful and strong."

*PLEASE - See your doctor if you have ongoing severe symptoms of anxiety. This could include extreme irritability, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, headaches, inability to concentrate, difficulty sleeping, digestive problems, changes in appetite, feeling helpless, a perceived loss of control, low self-esteem, loss of sexual desire, nervousness, frequent infections or illnesses.