

Covid-19 Stress Continuum Psychological First-Aid

This tool, adapted from a model developed by the US Marine Corp and Navy and further developed by Laura McGladry, RN to help First Responders dealing with the Covid 19 Pandemic.

It can help relieve stress during this crisis and assist us as first responders to develop resilience in both our work on the front lines and our daily lives.

This Continuum ranges from “Ready” meaning psychologically healthy to “Critical” meaning stress injury needing help.

Covid 19 Stress Continuum

- * **Minimize Exposure** - Avoid unnecessary exposure. Schedule exposed check ins.
- * **Potential** - Awareness of stress injury formation (overwhelmed, emotional connection, helplessness, error/guilt, isolation, near-miss, fatalities)
- * **Signs & Symptoms** - Ready / Reacting / Injured / Critical
- * **Follow up** - On-site debrief, one-on-one, peers/leadership, incident support
- * **Plan for Exposure** - Utilize peer, leadership and provisional help (for you & team members)

IMPACT — — — —> INJURY

READY	REACTING	INJURED	CRITICAL
<p>Covid-19: This is going to be hard, but we can do this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm concerned (and I'm going to look for resources) Sense of Mission Realistic, concerned but moving forward Appropriate cleaning and social distancing PBR - Pause, Breath, Repeat Supporting other team members Creative connection Outward focus Motivated to respond Awareness and planning Solution Driven Kindness to self/ others “We’re all in this together” Practicing gratitude 	<p>Covid-19: The government isn't doing anything</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm alarmed (and there's not enough to go around) I don't like Teleworking Short Fuse Fear based cleaning and isolation Communication breaking down Feeling there is a lack of communication Changes in personality Fatigue/weariness Teamwork breaking down Decrease in high performance No longer sharing ideas Temporary sleep and eating issues, distress Spinning at work, not able to complete tasks 	<p>Covid-19: I'm going to hide until this is over</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm scared (and I can't stop watching the news) Lack of motivation to leave the house Physical symptoms Exhaustion Withdrawal Emotional numbness Increased use of numbing tools such as alcohol Performance degrading Defeatist attitude Complaint driven AVOIDANT - “This doesn't involve me so I don't need to engage “This is never going to end” Highly individualized - every person for themselves 	<p>Covid-19: My life is over</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm terrified (and I can't breathe) Hopelessness Can't sleep Depression Thoughts of suicide Damage to relationships Feeling lost or out of control Unable to work Complete disengagement Giving up Paranoia and isolation Panic Can never get enough supplies Feelings of scarcity Blaming others Beating yourself up

Laura McGladry states that while everyone will become impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic, we can do a lot to protect our mental health and build resilience. She makes the following recommendations:

1. Build a psychological first aid kit/plan: The elements of psychological first aid are Safety, Calm, Connection, Efficacy and Hope. Think about ways you can incorporate these elements in your daily life.
2. Seek out reminders of your safety: Insulate yourself from constant “breaking news” stories on TV, radio and Internet. Limit the time you spend on social media sites. Focus on the fact that you are safe.
3. Create “Corona-Free Zones”: Engage in activities unrelated to Covid 19, such as playing with kids and pets, exercising, cooking, reading, learning new skills. Create set times when you check your email, social media, etc.
4. Plan calm into your day through exercise, sleep and deep breathing: Get away from the screen! Practice movement based exercises like yoga, Qi Gong, Tai Chi. Work on your sleep by going to bed at regular times. Meditation practices or just slow deep breaths activate your parasympathetic system and create calm.
5. Boost your efficacy: Because of social distancing and many closed businesses, it’s normal to feel that we’ve lost our identity (as a ski patroller, biker, mountaineer, climber, etc.). Now could be the time to take on a new project or learn a new skill, such as organizing your house/garage/shed, or building a garden. Start planning your next trip.
6. Help others: Contribute to helping out others in your community or area. Offer to run errands for neighbors. Call your friends, colleagues, family. Donate blood. Laura McGladry calls this “the ultimate efficacy”. Helping others is the antidote for fear and scarcity.
7. Cultivate hope: Take small steps to plan for your future. Share and express your gratitude for what you have on a daily basis. Be reassured that Covid 19 pandemic is an ever evolving process and that we are all moving through it.

Resources:

Laura McGladry RN, NOLS instructor and Mental Health practitioner

Stress and Resilience for Coronavirus

<https://amga.com/stress-resilience-coronavirus/>

<https://www.outsideonline.com/2411103/kai-lightner-climber-eating-disorder>