

## Tips for Managers to Address Self-care and Wellbeing on their Teams during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced widespread feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and worry across the globe. IRC staff, like all people, may experience changes in their mood or behavior as a result of these new stressors. As managers, we have a responsibility to maintain an environment of support in which we can all adapt together to the new constraints in our personal and professional lives. The following short guidance has been prepared to assist managers in caring for themselves and creating a supportive workplace for their staff.

### Tips to look after yourself as a manager:

- Consider establishing a new model for self-care which better responds to the needs and constraints of life during the pandemic. Scheduling a [free customized resilience planning session](#) could help.
- Stay in touch with your personal network of supportive friends and family. Schedule standing times to speak with those close to you if that helps to maintain regularity.
- Make space to care for your basic physical needs. These include restful sleep, nutritious eating, and regular exercise.
- Nurture your personal spirituality to maintain your sense of meaning and purpose.
- Consider exploring new approaches for managing your stress. [IRC's digital health and wellbeing resources](#) can assist.
- Learn about the [signs and symptoms of stress which are associated with the pandemic](#) and some of the key stress management techniques which you and others can use.
- Consider scheduling a free [manager consult](#) with an outside expert if you would like helpful guidance on how best to support staff members who might be struggling.

### Tips to support staff/team members:

- Acknowledge feelings of anxiety and fear. Recognize and provide reassurance that these responses and emotions are normal and understandable.
- Communicate that the health and safety of staff is a top concern both for the organization and for you as a manager.
- Thank staff for their efforts despite the many competing priorities in their lives.
- Suggest that staff members consider utilizing the [customized resilience planning service](#) to design a specialized plan for their self-care that addresses their unique stressors, vulnerabilities, and strengths.
- Remind staff who are distressed of the [free counseling options available to them through the EARP](#) and encourage them to try this free, confidential, remotely available service.
- Hold your 1:1 and team meetings via video as this can really enhance the sense of presence and allows you to see and respond to each other's body language.

- Make space to check in with staff members on the human aspects of the pandemic. You can do this in both 1:1 meetings and in your team meetings to help create an environment of safety and care. Key messages to share, explore, and reinforce include:
  - There is a lot which is not in our control at the moment. It can help to focus on the things we can control.
  - Be kind and generous with the way that you judge yourselves and others. There are new stressors now to which we are still adapting and it is ok if we are not as productive or balanced as usual. This will take time.
  - This is hard, and it is ok to ask for help. This can mean help with your work or help from professional supports like counselors. Please try to be open to asking for help, and ideally early enough that the help can be preventative.
  - Breaks and rest times are needed now more than ever, especially since working from home has a tendency to lengthen workdays and make it harder to feel separation between work and personal life.
- Consider adjustments to workloads, enabling flexible working arrangements, or providing modifications to deadlines as possible to ensure that overall pace of work is sustainable under the new conditions.
- Consider establishing a buddy system wherein staff are paired up to check in with and support one another.
- Consider either leading yourself or asking a volunteer from your team to deliver the Duty of Care program's self-guided training on "[Maintaining Resilience During the Pandemic](#)," which will provide supportive guidance and also help open up important conversations about the impacts of the pandemic on wellbeing within the team. If staff are interested, consider delivering additional offerings from the [DOC program's self-guided training list](#).
- Make sure that you are staying up to date on [IRC guidance related to the pandemic](#) and communicating this information with your team. This includes staff safety measures, adaptations to business process, travel restrictions, and emerging guidance. Recognize that this guidance could change, so make sure you carefully read the COVID-19 All Staff Emails and your department's newsletters and ask your staff to do the same.

The COVID-19 pandemic will be a challenging time that tests us all. As leaders, you have a unique role which can shape your staff's experience of the pandemic for better or worse. Through modeling good self-care and establishing an open, supportive dynamic between your team members you can help ensure that our employees stay safe and informed. Thank you for your service, and please reach out to the [DutyOfCare@rescue.org](mailto:DutyOfCare@rescue.org) if there are additional ways in which the IRC can support you to reach these goals.