



Managing Emotions as an Essential Worker

Being on the front lines of a crisis can feel overwhelming. You may be feeling a range of emotions at this time including, pride, fear, stress, anger, disappointment, gratitude, and grief. We are all impacted differently by this pandemic and as an essential worker you are dealing with additional pressures.

Even if your job title remains the same, the way you perform your job may feel very different. For instance, doing your job while wearing a mask presents new challenges. It is common to feel overwhelmed by the new safety precautions needed to protect yourself and others.

There are a number of signs that may indicate you are struggling to manage or cope with what is going on right now. They can include being easily distracted, feeling irritable, feeling increasingly angry, feeling down or sad most of the time, or lacking interest in things/numbness. Also, you might feel lonely or isolated, due to the new way you have to interact with your colleagues and family.

- Set realistic expectations; what once worked may not feel like a fit now, so be open to trying something new. Develop a range of strategies to care for yourself and build your emotional health.
- Consider times when you have been successful at managing your emotions, can you apply some of those strategies now?
- Stress can lead you to reactively consume, say, or do things that are not beneficial. Be mindful of triggers that lead to unhealthy behaviors and work to pause, breath and create alternative healthy behaviors.
- Consider potential healthy coping strategies in the following areas:
 - Physical health. Take care of your body for optimal health and functioning. Examples include: eating a nutritious snack or meal, physical activity, and sleep.
 - Emotional health. Recognize and manage a wide range of feelings. Examples include: connecting with others by phone or video, writing down your feelings, breathing mindfully and seeking counseling.
- Check in with yourself and frequently evaluate your coping skills. If something does not fit for you, look for an alternative. Try to eliminate the one-size-fits-all approach to determine what's healthy for you.
- Remember to prioritize time to give yourself the same compassion and care you give to others. Wellness and self-care do not have to take hours. Even 10 minutes at the end of your day, doing something that recharges you, makes a difference.
- Check out the EAP website eap.utexas.edu, for handouts about sleep, resilience, burnout, compassion fatigue, stress management, communication and more.
- Don't hesitate to contact EAP if you would like to work with a counselor on developing coping strategies. We are here to support you in this time. You can contact EAP by emailing eap@austin.utexas.edu or calling 512.471.3366 to schedule an appointment.

Your work supporting the campus community is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

