

The team at Cremasco hope you and your families are all doing well

First, we want to let you know that the Cremasco team is still hard at work for you. For a couple of weeks now we have each been working at home with our office computers connected to our network and our office extensions ringing through to our cell phones. Our office doors may be closed but we are here to serve you and your plan members. Over the last few weeks, we have all had to adjust to a new normal. When we all thought getting closer to people was a positive thing the opposite now applies. With social distancing being paramount in fighting this invisible enemy, electronics has quickly become a lifeline.

Staying in contact with friends and family is vital in our connection with the outside world and our own mental health. Keeping focused on essentials, staying positive and realizing you are not alone.

The entire world is dealing with this crisis and in our own little world keeping ourselves busy helps getting through difficult times. Healthy mind, healthy body and healthy soul can get us through anything.

In an effort to be supportive we have attached are some articles which may help you and your employees in coping with some of the difficulties we are all facing.

The three attached articles from our friends at Homewood Human Solutions may provide some help navigating these challenges:

Managing Stress & Anxiety:

- explains who may show signs and symptoms first, strategies to mitigate and resources if all else fails.

Quelling COVID-19 News Anxiety:

- an aid to support yourself, other employees and family members as a result of the abundance of information available from the media and online related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 Pandemic:

- An aid to support yourself, other employees and family members as a result of the questions and possible anxiety that has arisen from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regards,

Your Cremasco Team



COVID-19: Managing Stress and Anxiety

As we navigate uncharted territory and the evolving realities of COVID-19, we may experience potential fear, stress and anxiety due to the overwhelming volume of information and the demands being put in place to combat the spread and risk of infection.

Anxiety is highly common and is often triggered by specific events, trauma or stressful scenarios creating challenges in our daily activities and interactions. Stress results from normal reactions, where adjustments or a response is required, causing our mind and bodies to react with physical, mental or emotional actions.

People who may respond more strongly to stress and/or anxiety include: [1]

- Elderly populations, and people with chronic diseases who are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19
- Physicians, nurses, health care providers and first responders, those interacting with the general public
- Persons with mental health and addiction disorders including substance abuse
- Children and teenagers

Remember, we all react differently to stressful situations. Given our diverse backgrounds and the communities we live in, our beliefs and behaviours may vary.

Stressful reactions during this pandemic may include, but are not limited to: [1]

- Fear and worry about our health and the health of those you care about
- Changes in sleeping and/or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping and/or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol or tobacco, or other drugs

What can you do to stay calm during this period of uncertainty?

- Be aware of your mental health. Pay more attention to your feelings and reactions rather than the event itself.
- Reach out to your support system via text, telephone or through virtual conferencing. Maintain physical distancing. Let your family, colleagues and friends know how they can best support you during stressful periods.
- Create a daily routine. Establish a daily process and don't let the basics slip. Maintain a schedule and keep up with daily hygiene, chores and cleaning practices.
- Don't judge or blame yourself. Don't criticize yourself for having these reactions. Be patient with yourself.
- Avoid saturation. Manage your media and online intake and try and focus on something else.
- Find something to help distract you. Some people find it helpful to keep busy with hobbies, routine chores or physical exercise.
- Take time to rest and relax. Maintain good sleep habits and take time for yourself and practice taking deep breaths, or meditation.

What should you do if your stress or anxiety doesn't diminish from week to week?

It's better not to keep the worrying thoughts and anxieties to yourself. People close to you don't always know how to help, despite their best intentions. If these reactions have not diminished from week to week, don't hesitate to contact your assistance program for coaching or counselling support. If you take good care of yourself, ensuring that you obtain the support you need, you will gradually regain your normal sense of self, given the current COVID-19 restrictions in place.

Remember that taking care of yourself is integral to being able to help others. Helping your family, friends, co-workers and others cope with stress can aide in making your community and workforce stronger.

Please be mindful of your community. There are vulnerable populations who are more susceptible to COVID-19 than others. We are all in this together.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Manage Anxiety & Stress (2020) Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>



How Much Information Is Too Much?

Quelling COVID-19 News Anxiety

How Much Information Is Too Much?

Quelling COVID-19 News Anxiety

an aide to support yourself, other employees and family members as a result of the abundance of information available from the media and online related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Millions are working from home and practising social distancing. Schools are closing, some products in grocery stores are scarce. There is so much information to access daily and some of it can be overwhelming. What can you do to help stay calm during this period of unprecedented change?

Manage your media and online intake

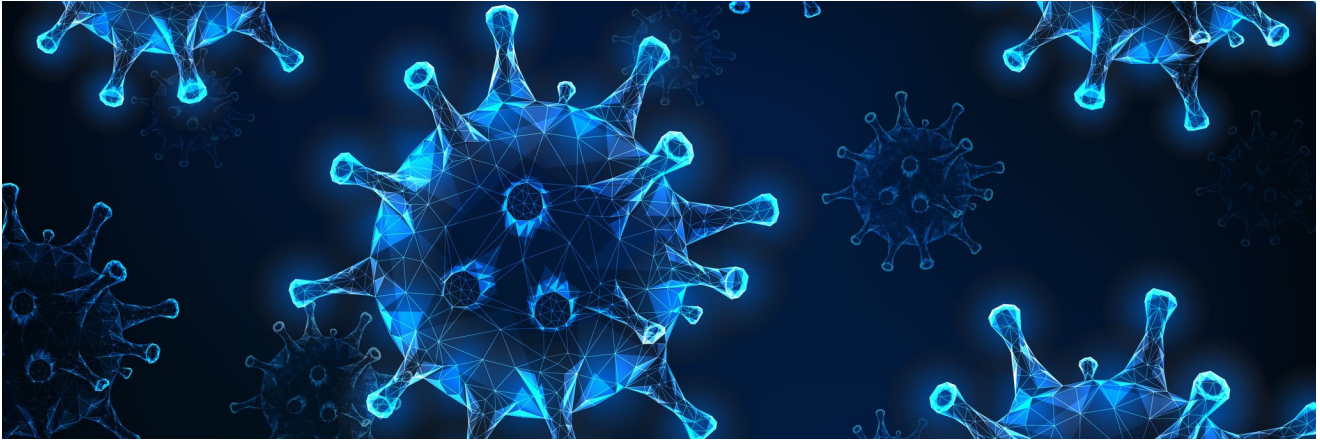
It's common that during periods of crisis, natural disasters or terrorist events, as people are more exposed to media their feelings of distress or anxiety may increase. It's important to give yourself a break from the news from time to time. It's important to not avoid the news entirely but be mindful of the source - as some information can be vague or unfounded. It's always better to rely on trusted forms of communication from organizations such as Health Canada, Centers for Disease Control or World Health Organization. Check back periodically, but don't over-consume to a point where you are feeling overwhelmed.

Try and focus on something else

During this time, relying on your support network can be particularly helpful. Keep in touch with your friends and loved ones, but talk about things other than COVID-19 (entertainment, pop culture etc.) so you aren't causing or feeding into more worry. Also try and take some time to focus on a hobby such as reading, writing or trying something new to help you relax.

Be aware of your mental health

If you find that your distress or anxiety is interfering with relationships, school or work, you may want to reach out to your EAP or a mental health professional. If you are already in treatment for a condition, you should continue being treated during the pandemic.



Managing the Impact

The COVID-19 Pandemic

Managing the Impact

The COVID-19 Pandemic

An aide to support yourself, other employees and family members as a result of the questions and possible anxiety that has arisen from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This news has placed global populations on alert causing varied reactions in different countries and regions including Canada and the United States of America.

It is normal during this time of uncertainty for us to speculate on the potential spread of the virus and to experience understandable reactions from worry to anxiety about this health concern. At this time, workers within health care and emergency services sectors and their families may be particularly vulnerable to strong reactions.

What are some possible reactions?

When we are uncertain about our own and our family's health and safety, we experience physical, emotional and behavioural reactions. You may experience a range of reactions varying in degrees of intensity as this outbreak continues to have a global impact. You may find yourself preoccupied with news events which may trigger worrying thoughts. We all react somewhat differently yet we may experience common reactions such as:

- Emotional reactions. Fear, anxiety, distress, anger, irritability, sadness, guilt, and uncertainty.
- Mental reactions. Disbelief about the extent of the outbreak, loss of concentration, recurring visions of media images about the pandemic, fearful thoughts about travelling, forgetfulness, indecisiveness, confusion, distressing dreams.
- Physical reactions. Numbness, shock, headaches, loss of appetite, sleep difficulties, persistent heart palpitations, fatigue, nausea, and gastrointestinal problems.
- Behavioural reactions. Tearfulness, feeling disconnected, excessive vigilance, withdrawal or isolation from the mainstream population, increased tendency to blame or criticize others, increased consumption of alcohol or medication to cope with uncertainty.

Are these reactions “normal”?

Absolutely. These are normal reactions that human beings experience when they are in abnormally distressing situations. Research has shown that when you acknowledge anxiety and you take care of it, anxiety will usually diminish within a few weeks. Most people recover even after acute traumatic events and they return to normal or close to normal functioning, either on their own or with the assistance of a mental health professional.

Do these reactions always occur after hearing news of an outbreak?

Not always. Everyone experiences reactions in a way that is unique to themselves and their situation. When a viral outbreak occurs a long way away, the perceived risk can be viewed as less concerning. If you or someone you know is in closer proximity to an outbreak location, this can trigger a stronger reaction to the news. Some individuals experience delayed reactions, as a result of exposure to the news over time and this can invoke a growing sense of fear and anxiety.

Is there any way to avoid these types of reactions?

You can never avoid them completely. Even individuals who are well-informed and well-prepared may experience acute stress reactions in such situations. Police officers, paramedics, first-aid workers and fire fighters can have strong stress reactions to emergency situations, despite their training and experience. Remember that these are normal reactions.

What can you do?

- Pay more attention to your feelings and reactions than to the event itself.
- Don't judge or blame yourself. Don't criticize yourself for having these reactions. Be patient. Think about how you would support a friend in this situation and then treat yourself the same way.
- Try to reduce other sources of stress in your life for a while.
- Take the time to talk about your physical and emotional reactions with someone close to you like a friend, partner or loved one. You can also turn to coworkers.
- Let your family, colleagues and friends know how they could best support you during your period of stress. If they are doing something unhelpful, give yourself permission to let them know.
- Find something that helps distract you. Some people find it helpful to keep busy (leisure activities, hobbies, routine chores, warm baths, physical exercise, etc.), while others find it helpful to relax.
- Try to avoid saturation from exposure to the constant media coverage of this news.
- Take time to rest and maintain good sleep habits.
- If you find you are experiencing distressing thoughts and feeling anxious, remind yourself that most of us are safe and not affected by this disease

What should you do if your stress reactions don't diminish from week to week?

It's better not to keep the worrying thoughts and anxieties all to yourself. People close to you don't always know how to help, despite their best intentions. If these reactions have not diminished from week to week, don't hesitate to contact your Employee & Family Assistance Program to meet with a professional. If you take good care of yourself, ensuring that you obtain the support you might need, you will gradually regain your normal sense of self and resume life activities.

For additional information on the COVID-19 pandemic here are some helpful resources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/>