Communicating and Managing with Empathy in a Time of Crisis:

A Cleveland Clinic Guide

Contents

Communicating with Empathy in Uncertain Times

Communication has always been important – in both our professional and personal lives. Heading into 2020, none of us could have anticipated just how essential communication would be, or how dramatically it would change.

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way most of us interact with one another. Public health and safety measures like social distancing and face masks impede face-to-face communication. Racism and social unrest are also adding to the levels of fear and stress each of us experiences.

In healthcare, we deal with strong emotions every day. Patients are sick; treatments are often less than fully effective; and complex medical information must be translated into a form comprehensible to laypersons. Even with all of our medical training and education, we find that physicians, like everyone else, need to practice communication skills in order to be effective. At Cleveland Clinic, we have established a Center for Excellence in Healthcare Communication in order to ensure that all of our caregivers communicate with compassion and empathy. Since we launched the program, we've trained thousands of medical professionals - as well as professionals from outside the medical community using evidence-based materials we developed.

This guide to communicating with empathy is a compilation of the training documents we have assembled for Cleveland Clinic caregivers. We hope that these insights and resources help enhance communication for our community and business partners as you navigate these unprecedented times.

Adrienne Boissy, MD, MA
Chief Experience Officer, Cleveland Clinic

Contributing Cleveland Clinic Experts

James I. Merlino, MD
Chief Clinical Transformation Officer,
Back to Work Initiative Lead

Stephanie Bayer, JD
Senior Director, Office of Patient Experience

Adrienne Boissy, MD, MA
Chief Experience Officer

Rev. Amy Greene, DMin
Director, Center for Spiritual Care

K. Kelly Hancock, DNP, RN, NE-BC, FAAN
Chief Caregiver Officer

Chris Nagel, PCC, GPCC
Senior Director, Organizational and Leadership Development

Lauren Peeples
Learning and Development Specialist,
Center for Excellence in Healthcare Communication

Heather Phillips
Senior Director, Corporate Communications

Anthony Warmuth, FACHE, CHPQ, CPPS
Executive Director, Clinical Transformation

Amy Windover, PhD
Director,
Center for Excellence in Healthcare Communication

Communication Challenges in Times of Crisis

In times of crisis, like a pandemic, everyone is experiencing stress. That is normal as our lives have changed in many ways. The ways stress presents itself differs among individuals and may be characterized by varying levels of fear, irritability, distrust and even overwhelming optimism or an indifferent attitude.

This is because stress activates our brain's amygdala, the part of the brain involved in emotions and their associated meanings. When the amygdala is activated, it can overpower the logic part of the brain, making it hard to respond to information.

This makes clear communication in times of stress even harder because our brains are not processing information in the usual way.

Therefore, we must modify our typical communication styles to be very intentional.

Communicating with Your Employees

The COVID-19 pandemic is a complex situation that requires frequent and consistent communication with all stakeholders. As reports of the illness and its toll from other nations began to surface, Cleveland Clinic leadership, along with its Corporate Communications team, began planning a coordinated response.

As employees head back to the workplace, they continue to face uncertainty that they cannot escape professionally or personally. COVID-19 is everywhere. At Cleveland Clinic, our communications approach was to demystify information and provide our caregivers with the knowledge they needed to do their jobs.

We made it a point to send at least two communications to every caregiver, every day. One includes a message from our CEO five days per week (both video and written communication); the other is a daily newsletter that is distributed at the same time each day, seven days per week. Each communication had relevant COVID-19 information they needed to know to support our accelerated response. With every message, we expressed our support and gratitude for their dedicated service to our organization and communities.

Communicating with Your Employees

As organizations begin to rethink how communications should work amid the COVID-19 pandemic, below are some of Cleveland Clinic's best practices to consider.

Plan

› **Establish an incident command team or COVID-19 task force** that includes representatives from Corporate Communications. Meet regularly and share information that communication professionals can provide to the organization/company.

› **Leadership involvement is a critical necessity** and should include a cadence of regular communications to all your key audiences. Communication from leadership should be planned and provide valuable, consistent information to your employees and other key stakeholders.

› **Ensure your reactivation efforts align with your organization's values and mission** and tie them into your communications and messaging. Create a mission moment to make this mission explicit.

› **Rethink how you work.** Do you need to consider moving from a five-day work week to a seven-day work week in your Communications department? Meet twice daily to identify needs at the beginning of the day and then wrap-up at the end of the day so everyone is aware and involved. Develop a procedure for clear hand-offs of projects at the end of each shift.

› **Identify target audiences,** what information they need, how they will receive it and how often.

› **Assign Communications team members to different areas** so they develop subject matter expertise and contacts within the departments with which they work.

› **Reimagine how you communicate.** With things changing quickly, you will likely need to increase the frequency of your communications. Evaluate the tools you have in place and identify how to utilize them in this evolving pandemic.

› **Ask your employees to be vigilant** about procedures, to peer-identify people who they see putting themselves at risk, and to take care at home to protect their families.

› **Tell your people how much you appreciate and care about them.** Assure them of the continuity of your mission, vision and values.

› **Be flexible.** An open-minded approach is essential as you rethink and reimagine the best ways to address your communication needs with employees.

Develop

› **Develop repetitive, consistent messaging.** Ensuring that everyone understands what is happening given the speed with which it's occurring is difficult. Script important messages for different sources and echo them throughout several different communications (e.g., e-newsletters, intranet postings, phone and video meetings, conversations with managers, talking points, etc.).

› **Customize information for each location.** Because each state/country has different restrictions in place, share the communications with local Communications teams in a customizable format.

› **Develop a procedure for clear hand-offs.**

Monitor

› **Designate point people** in your Corporate Communications department to review all communications before they are distributed to ensure a consistent approach. Inconsistency breeds rumors and mistrust.

› **Monitor comments** on the intranet and social media. Respond when necessary, and consult with experts as needed to dispel rumors, answer questions and address concerns.

R.E.D.E. to Communicate

Effective communication starts with empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand, share and relate to the feelings of another. This is vital whether you are talking to an employee or a customer.

Empathy can be conveyed in many ways. At Cleveland Clinic, our internationally recognized R.E.D.E. to Communicate® model is the cornerstone of our clinical communication training program and the conceptual framework for effective communication. In this model, we suggest three communication strategies to build a meaningful connection, starting with how to establish the relationship, then how to develop the relationship, and finally how to engage the relationship. We also will provide mnemonic devices to try and make recollection easier.

In our scenarios, let's pretend an employee is concerned about returning to the workplace because of the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Support, Acknowledge, Validate, Emotion Name (S.A.V.E.)

The first technique to establish the relationship is conveying empathy with S.A.V.E.

The ability to convey empathy and respect should start with your greeting. Approach with a warm smile in a relaxed manner with open body language. Recognize and respond to signs of physical or emotional distress. Finally, allow space to be with the other person and their emotion without judgment.

R.E.D.E. Model
(pronounced READY)

3 phases of Relationship:

- Establish
- Develop
- Engage

Demonstrate empathy using S.A.V.E.

Support – statements of partnership

- I'm here for you.
- Let's work together

Acknowledge – statements that acknowledge what a person is doing or has done, convey respect

- I can imagine that you are worried about your safety and that of others
- You have been taking precautions to stop of the spread of COVID-19

Validate – statements that validate or legitimize how a person feels

- Anyone in your shoes would feel that way
- Fear, at some levels, helps us to be alert to dangers and avoid or minimize them

Emotion Naming

- You're worried about our ability to keep everyone safe
- You seem <insert emotion>

The S.A.V.E. method is a good first step to create rapport, a foundation for relational communication and allows us to meet a person where they are.

Vital activities, Ideas, Expectations, Worries (V.I.E.W.)

Once a relationship has been established and empathy offered, open-ended questions that explore the employee's experience and perspective can further develop the relationship. V.I.E.W. is a mnemonic that allows you to elicit how an employee is doing, the context in which they are working, and the concerns they have. It isn't necessary to ask the questions in order or to ask all of the questions. Often, asking just one of the questions is sufficient to initiate conversation about an employee's experience. Here is what the V.I.E.W. mnemonic may look like in the same scenario.

Assess, Reflect, Inform, Asses (A.R.I.A.)

When you want to engage the relationship you have with an employee, A.R.I.A. is one way to facilitate a dialogue vs. a monologue. A.R.I.A. allows you to provide information in a manner that ensures mutual understanding and subsequent integration into an employee's work.

Here is an example of how this conversational technique may look.

› **Assess:** "How are you doing?" (allow the employee to respond)

"I'm fine, considering I'm risking my life to come to work today and the exposing my family to the virus."

• **Reflect back what you hear, including the underlying emotion:** "You're worried that you might get exposed and then spread symptoms to your loved one."

"Yes, of course I am. We work with the public and have no idea if people are bringing in COVID-19."

• **Inform:** "I appreciate you coming to work today. We've implemented a number of things to help keep you and your loved ones safe. We've increased cleaning, added hand sanitizers throughout the facility, encouraged use of masks, and have symptoms checks with signage about physical distancing. We'll continue these things as long as necessary to keep everyone safe."

Develop with V.I.E.W.

Vital Activities

• How are you doing?

or How is [the pandemic] impacting your day to day?

Ideas

• What ideas do you have about [what might make your work easier]?

or Have you heard of ideas that others have implemented to [make work easier]?

Expectations

• What outcome do you hope to achieve?

Worries

• What concerns you most [about your safety and that of your loved ones]?

Engage with A.R.I.A.

Assess: Use open-ended question to inquire how another is doing.

Reflect: Convey back to the other person the feeling or response with empathy.

Inform: Provide information.

Assess: Gauge how the information was received through silence or direct eliciting.

• **Assess:** "What are your thoughts about the measures we've taken?"

Speak slowly when using this technique and provide small chunks of information at a time. Use understandable language and assess the emotional reaction to the information provided before moving on.

When you are providing a lot of new information, it can be helpful to ask your employee to teach back what they hear. While this takes more time, it can be invaluable in ensuring you are on the same page.

The Importance of Transparency

As mentioned, in times of crisis, the brain's emotional center can hijack and overpower the logical center. In the absence of intentional and directed information, people have a tendency to fill in the blank space, which means their narratives may not be based in fact nor truth. Being transparent helps create a narrative that is more accurate and informed.

There are a number of ways to increase transparency in communication. First, identify all the ways employees and customers receive information. These could include in-person, social media, emails and newsletters. Once you have identified all the communication vehicles available, it's important to establish ownership for each of them to ensure consistent messaging.

Next, increase the frequency of updates. If possible, provide a regular cadence with the same time and process for sharing new information to create trust. Messages should also come from those with authority for decision making.

Transparent communication also minimizes ambiguity. Defining policies and processes, especially when things have changed as rapidly as crisis necessitates, helps show respect for your employees and customers. This may also include signage for physical distancing expectations or to clarify expectations.

Transparent communication also includes feedback channels for clarification and questions.

Conversations About Change

Have you ever been 'talked at' instead of 'talked with' in a real life conversation? It doesn't feel great to have someone talk AT you. It can seem patronizing, or leave you feeling like you might as well not have been there at all. Conventional change management can be like that – a communication plan to talk at people. One of the best things you can do during a big change is ask people what they think. Remember, it is okay for your team members to disagree, be angry, or have other emotional responses. It isn't likely that everyone will be happy. Encourage talking to make sure everyone feels fully informed, has the opportunity to express their opinion, and has what they need to make decisions. Ask about what support they may need to 'disagree and commit anyway' if that's the best they can do. People want to know about two things: the change itself and how it will affect them. Research shows they want to hear this through personal discussions with direct leadership and knowledgeable people they trust.

Components of Effective Change Messages

Messages about the change itself:

› Current situation and the rationale for the change

› Vision of the organization after the change takes place

› Basics of what is changing, how and when it will change, and what doesn't change - your commitment to values.

› Expectation that change will happen and is not a choice

› Status updates on the implementation of the change, including success stories

Messages about how the change impacts the caregiver:

› Impact of the change on the day-to-day activities of the employee (WIIFM – What's in it for me?)

› Implications of the change on job security (Will I have a job?)

› Specific behaviors and activities expected from the employee, including support of the change

› Procedures for getting help and assistance during the change

Questions to Ask Your Team to Elicit Discussion

› How do you feel about this?

› What do you see your role as in this change?

› What's your opinion about this change?

› What's your experience with this type of change?

› What are you working on now that may be impacted by this change?

› What are your ideas about this change?

› What (if anything) would you do differently about this change?

› Why do you think this change is needed (or not)?

› What one thing could we do differently?

› What should I keep doing to help everyone through the change?

› When have you seen change work well?

› What are you afraid of?

As a Leader, You Know You Are Effectively Sponsoring a Change if You Are…

› Able and willing to deliver consequences, both positive and negative

› Able and willing to monitor status and activities

› Committed to providing resources

› Able to sustain ongoing support both privately and publicly

› Aware of current issues

› Dissatisfied with current state

› Clear on goals and the change required

› Aware of the impact of change

› Solicit the opinions of your team, including dissenting opinions and rationale

Communicating Safety Requirements

It is likely that you have had to implement new safety requirements to keep your employees and customers safe. Make sure your business is safely and responsibly resuming operations and following guidelines to facilitate a safer environment, such as utilizing face masks, hand hygiene and physical distancing.

Some of the safety requirements may require modification to usual empathic communication practices. For instance, a face mask can cover a warm smile or muffle a kind greeting. But there are many ways to continue to show empathy.

Communicating while wearing a mask:

Listen to the other person.

› Make eye contact (more important than ever).

› Practice open body language.

  • Keep your arms uncrossed.

  • Face the other person.

› Smile, even through your mouth is covered, because people can "see" and feel your smile behind the mask.

› Avoid multi-tasking to demonstrate active listening.

› Pause; do not talk in the doorway while exiting.

› Hear their entire story; don't interrupt.

› Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues such as sighing; turning away from you, etc.

› Reflect back what you heard.

  • "What I'm hearing you say is…."

  • "It sounds like….."

› Allow the person to clarify.

› **Say: (for example) "I know it is harder to communicate with this mask on."**

Acknowledge the inconvenience and difficulty of the situation.

› Verbally identify emotion or situation.

› Nod when appropriate to acknowledge you are listening and understanding.

› **Say: "Communicating like this can make the experience more stressful."**

Express regret.

› Offer an apology for the situation.

› **Say: "I am sorry that communication may be impacted by our masks."**

Take action.

› Ask if there is anything specific that they need.

› **Say: "I want you to know that I care about you, and I want to communicate with you in a way that shows that. How may I help you today?"**

Show appreciation and bring closure.

› Acknowledge the circumstances.

› **Say: "Thank you for trusting me today. I really want to take care of your needs."**

Body language is crucial.

› Relax your shoulders.

› Keep your hands out of your pockets or off your hips.

› Avoid crossing you arms in front of you.

› Smile.

Expressive eyebrows.

› Look at the eyebrows of customers or community members to help guide information and be aware of your own.

› Raised eyebrows can show listening and happiness.

› Eyebrows pinched together can indicate sadness.

› Eyebrows in a "V" can mean angry.

Communicating Safety Requirements

Volume and tone of voice matters.

› Speak up, especially if you are wearing a cloth mask, which can block sound.

› Modulate the tone of your words to help convey empathy.

› Watch how quickly you speak. Rushed speech behind masks can interfere with understanding and frustrate a listener.

Consider space.

› Maintain SAFE six feet.

› Remove physical barriers that could block view.

› Create a clear path.

Be honest and direct.

› It is acceptable to explain that you are concerned the mask may interfere with good communication and that you care.

S-A-F-E

SIX AWAY FROM EVERYONE

Keep 6 feet between you + others
to help prevent the spread.

Explore opportunities in cloth masks.

› While you must maintain professionalism, consider if you can use masks to build a relationship with fabric or color choice.

› For example, if you work with children, can you use masks with cartoons. Or consider if your mask choice can help share something about you that would help build a relationship like a favorite animal or fun pattern.

› Providing others with your picture and/or business card can also improve connection.

Cleveland Clinic

Responding to Conflict

Sometimes conflict and disagreement can be more prevalent during a crisis because of the stress of the environment. This can escalate misunderstanding or create adversarial communications, especially as it may relate to new ways of operating. Conflict is normal and, if handled well, can actually deepen relationships.

One technique for empathic response to conflict is called the H.E.A.R.T.® method. H.E.A.R.T. is a service recovery model that stands for:

Hear • Empathize • Apologize • Respond • Thank

This can be used with both customers and employees to strong outcomes when used authentically and with patience.

Are you COMMUNICATING with H.E.A.R.T.®?

These are tough times, among the toughest. As we interact with one another, it's more important than ever to practice kindness and compassion with others and ourselves.

S.T.A.R.T. with Heart®

Smile and greet everyone warmly
Tell your name, your role, and what to expect to quickly connect and reduce confusion
Actively listen and **a**ssist when you can, and ask for help if you need it
Rapport and relationship-building will help get you and others through this time
Thank all parties for all they are doing in a difficult situation

Respond with H.E.A.R.T.®

When you encounter people who are upset or angry – and you likely will – take a deep breath and try your best to:

Hear what they're saying without interrupting or expressing judgment

Empathize in a way that feels genuine to you

Apologize for the situation and acknowledge it's difficult

Respond to the best of your ability and reach out for help when necessary

Thank them for sharing their concern

Cleveland Clinic

Scenario 1: An individual does not want to wear a mask that was required for ensuring safe working conditions.

Hear

› Listen to the individual.
› **Say: "It sounds like you are worried about the mask. Tell me more about that."**
› **And/or: "Others have shared similar concerns… help me understand what concerns you most about wearing a mask?"**

Empathize

› Acknowledge the inconvenience and/or difficulty of the situation.
› **Say: "I appreciate you sharing that [spoken with warmth and genuine appreciation]."**
› **And/or: "I know wearing a mask can feel uncomfortable. It can also make it hard to hear what people are saying."**
› **And/or: "This has to be so stressful."**

Apologize

› Acknowledge the difficulty of the situation.
› **Say: "Masks are (uncomfortable/frustrating/etc.) and I am sorry."**
› **And/or: "I wish there were an easier way to keep everyone safe."**

Respond

› Take action.
› **Say: "We are asking everyone to wear masks to help keep our employees, customers and loved ones safe. There is no way of knowing who has COVID-19 or not by looking at them. Your safety - and that of our people - is the most important thing to us."**
› **And/or: "Having everyone to wear masks over nose, chin and mouth helps reduce the spread of infection."**

› **And/or: "For your safety and the safety of all, these masks should be worn by anyone entering our shared spaces. We ask that you wear a mask to enter."**

Thank

› Show appreciation and bring closure.
› **Say: "I want to thank you for keeping us all safe. Your cooperation means a lot to us."**
› **And/or: "I appreciate your help with this. Thank you for trusting us."**

Scenario 2: A customer is making inappropriate, derogatory and discriminatory remarks about someone's race.

Hear

› Have open body language even if they can't see you.

› Use firm and direct tone, but do not raise your voice.

› Avoid multi-tasking to demonstrate listening.

› Avoid sighing or eye rolling.

› **Say: "What I hear you saying is [you're upset about the service received and then made a derogatory comment]."**

Empathize

› Verbally acknowledge their emotion.

› **Say: "This may be your experience."**

› It is not necessary or appropriate to empathize with their derogatory remarks.

Apologize

› Offer apologies, to the extent appropriate, that you are setting boundaries.

› **Say: "I am sorry this is even a necessary conversation, but discrimination is not acceptable or tolerated."**

› **And/or: "We believe in the inclusion and safety of our clients and colleagues. Discrimination is not acceptable or tolerated at the <facility>."**

Respond

› Explain that you are happy to hear the experience.

› **Say: "We believe in the dignity, inclusion and safety of all employees and customers. I want to help you. We have two options: You can refrain from using that language, or, we'll engage management as the next step."**

Thank

› Express genuine appreciation for any openness or compromise.

› In this instance, a short albeit genuine thank you is preferred over a more specific appreciation.

› **Say: "Thank you"**

Cleveland Clinic

15

Creating Teamwork

Strong teams also create empathic environments. Safe communication practices help establish strong teams. Start by inviting people to dialogue. To be able to listen to what is upsetting or top of mind for a co-worker, one must be open and willing to engage and call attention.

Strong teams take time to check in with each other. They acknowledge and support each other and use time together to include recognition for good performance and helpfulness.

Strong teams also notice when a member is down. Do not be afraid to identify emotions of colleagues. If someone is struggling, ask if there is anything that can be delegated.

Strong teams also allow room for joy. They invite a space for appropriate humor. Even during times of crisis, a shared laugh is possible and bonding.

Leaders also model the behavior expected of team members. This may mean a leader steps in and assists with the work to be done. It could take the form of rewards for strong examples of teamwork in the moment. It also needs to include accountability.

Teamwork developed with intention creates empathic environments for employees and customers alike.

Hearing Everyone's Voice Through a Thinking Environment

A Thinking Environment is the set of conditions under which people can think for themselves and think well together. They make it possible for people's thinking to move further, go faster, discover insights and produce brand-new ideas in record time. This is most important during times of crisis and stress.

Key Elements in a Thinking Environment

› **Attention:** Give your attention to the person who is speaking.

› **Ease:** Allow each person to speak without interruption; say what you wish to say in 2 minutes or less.

› **Appreciation:** Focus on what's working.

› **Equality:** In round, each person gets a chance to speak (without commentary).

Different Ways to Use a Thinking Environment

Thinking Environment
(Up to 8 Participants)

› Explore an idea with a group.

› Slow down a conversation.

› Hear from everyone.

How it Works:

Take a minute to introduce the key elements. (Attention, Ease, Appreciation, Equality) to the group. Give the group 2-3 minutes to read a concept.

› **Opening Round**
  • Up to 2 minutes each.
  • Ask the group: "What is your current thinking about _____?"

› **Open Dialogue** (Still maintaining the key elements)
  • 10-15 minutes total.
  • Ask the group: "What do you notice now that you've heard everyone's thinking? Is anything present that wasn't before?"

› **Closing Round** (Ask for scribe & volunteer to share during report out)
  • Up to 2 minutes each.
  • Ask the group: "What is your freshest thinking about _____?"

Thinking Council
(Up to 10 Participants)

Help a single person get feedback or ideas on a situation in which they may be stuck or want ideas.

How it Works:

› Person identifies a situation, project or issue that they would love others' ideas/thoughts about (to help reaffirm and/or move you from being stuck). Share the background of the situation (3-5 minutes).

› Do a Round. Participants share their thoughts, ideas and/or questions (frame questions as statements- "If I were looking at this I would want to know…").

› Person shares freshest thinking based on what they heard from participants (2 minutes).

› Final round of acknowledgement/appreciation. Participants share what they appreciate about thinking through situation, what they got and/or appreciation for person who brought the topic to the council.

Thinking Pair (2 Participants)

Be present to someone else's thinking.

How it Works:

› Listen and give full attention.

› Ask a question: "What would you like to think about _____?"

› Listen and stay present yet neutral. You do not want your nonverbal to influence the person's thinking.

› If person stops, ask "What else would you like to say about that?"

*This was adapted from *Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind*, by Nancy Kline.

Remote Work Best Practices

It may be some time before everyone returns to the office. Even when they do return, the office will likely look very different than the workplace they left.

Remote work is likely part of a new "norm," and this is not necessarily a bad thing. Leaders report increased productivity, and employees report feeling more efficient without the usual office distractions. That said, it can be challenging when a change occurs in an employee's work environment that requires new processes, limits access to colleagues and disrupts their support systems. Below are best practices to ensure continued productivity and wellbeing during remote work:

› **Set clear expectations about productivity,** and ensure everyone is on the same page with deadlines.

› **Encourage employees to be visible on virtual communication platforms** by providing frequent status updates, replying quickly to questions and requests, etc.

› **Schedule regular video conferences with your team,** and build-in time for the team to check-in and connect with one other. Video conferencing should also be used in lieu of or in addition to phone or email for difficult conversations.

› **Empathy and relationships still need to be built over a virtual interface** and even a one-minute check in can accomplish this.

› **Prioritize documentation and communication.** Communication is often cited as the most significant challenge to remote work. To ensure that everyone is on the same page, document more than you would in a traditional office setting. Document ideas, status and next steps, and share feelings about what is going well and what is not.

› **Use the right tools.** Identify which collaboration platforms will work for best for your team. Additionally, ensure that employees have access to any additional tools they need to be productive remotely (e.g., monitor, keyboard, headset with microphone). Finally, ensure that employees receive adequate training so that these tools are used properly.

› **Resist the urge to multitask during meetings.** Turn the video on, and give your colleagues your complete attention.

› **Decide as a team when to turn video on and off** to normalize the value of video for engagement as well as the mental exhaustion that can occur from videos being on all the time.

› **Don't forget to take breaks and drink plenty of water.** Use a smart watch to help you maintain your health.

› **Stick to a routine.** Although it may seem tempting to roll out of bed and begin the workday, establishing a morning routine can help maintain work-life balance and productivity. Developing a routine to signal the end of the work day is just as important.

› **Remember that you can schedule virtual coffee breaks** or social times with your team to encourage socialization.
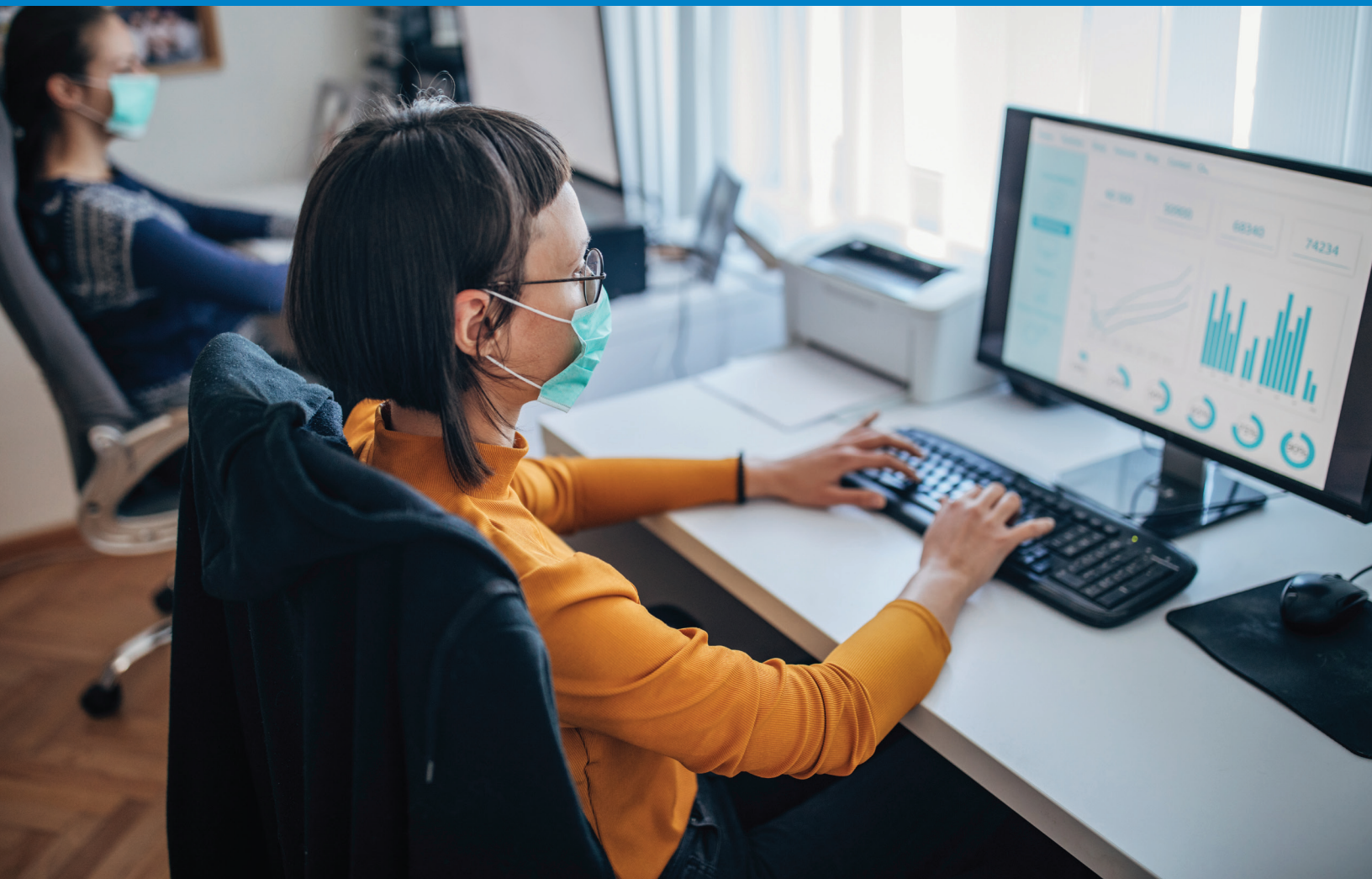
Purpose-Driven Work

Individuals can be more committed to each other and the company when purpose is embedded in the work. Purpose can be found in many places. A common way to drive purpose is to share customer stories. This can reinforce the meaning and value of the work and has been shown to reduce professional burnout. Invite customers to contribute and share experiences and solicit compliments. Share these messages widely using the intranet, team meetings, or even a newsletter.

Using language of appreciation with fellow colleagues also helps reinforce purpose. This can sound like "I know how meaningful this is for the customer" when asking a colleague for help. Consider the efforts of all team members and offer appreciation in the moment when appropriate.

Solicit from others the meaning they find in the work. Ask, "How have you helped someone?" and celebrate those responses and stories. Leaders should round throughout all areas where employees are working when on site and share gratitude and ask people for the purpose of their work.

Employee Wellbeing and Resiliency

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented event, disrupting our way of life and causing increased stress and anxiety for workers everywhere. Information is rapidly changing and can be confusing, even scary. While some workers may successfully manage their anxiety levels, the ongoing situation can be overwhelming for everyone.

According to the CDC, stressors associated with an infectious disease outbreak can include:

› Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones.

› Changes in sleep or eating patterns.

› Difficulty sleeping or concentrating.

› Worsening of chronic health problems.

› Worsening of mental health conditions.

› Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

Healthy employees create healthy organizations and this is never more apparent and important than during a health crisis. Wellbeing is not just physical, but emotional too.

Employee wellbeing and resiliency is not just a responsibility for an individual employee but can be built into the culture of empathetic companies, which creates less stressed employees, better ready to communicate well with customers.

Employee Wellbeing and Resiliency

Managing stress

Following these steps to manage stress and add a sense of normalcy can go a long way to help you and your employees cope with the ever-changing environment and help keep those around you calm and focused. Encourage individuals who seem unable to manage the increased levels of stress and anxiety to explore available resources, such as the organization's employee assistance program (EAP).
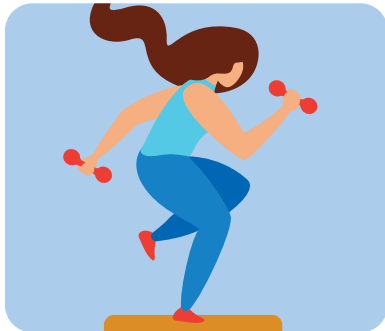
Exercise regularly. Aerobic exercise (e.g., walking, running, hiking or playing with your kids/pets), can help release endorphins (natural substances that help you feel better and maintain a positive attitude).

Maintain a healthy diet. Stress can adversely affect your eating habits and your metabolism. The best way to combat stress or emotional eating is to be mindful of what triggers stress eating and to be ready to fight the urge.
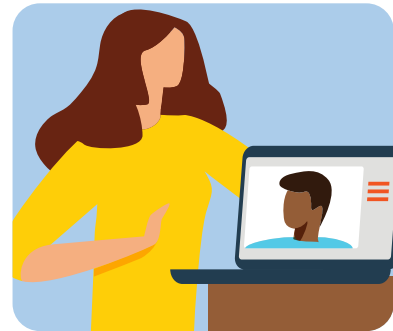
Connect with others. Fear and isolation can lead to depression and anxiety. Reach out to family members, friends and colleagues regularly via phone, text, FaceTime or other virtual platforms.

Take a break. While it's important to stay informed of the latest news and developments, the evolving nature of the news can get overwhelming. Find a balance of exposure to news that works for you. Whenever reasonably possible, disconnect physically and mentally.

Get enough sleep. It's especially important that individuals get the recommended amount of sleep to help them stay focused on work and on managing the stress the current outbreak can bring. Experts recommend avoiding alcohol and stimulants like caffeine and nicotine before bed.

Resilience

We have all experienced significant change and we know that some changes may be particularly difficult and stressful. Resilience is the characteristic that we all possess to some degree, to adapt to even the most significant changes. Resilience is the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress.

By working on developing resilience, we "bounce back" from difficult experiences. Research shows that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. People commonly demonstrate resilience and are able to increase their tendency to be resilient by practicing a set of behaviors, thinking certain thoughts and demonstrating specific actions.

Resilience starts with a sense of optimism and focusing on acknowledging that the change is not overwhelming, but rather is a challenge to be met. Resilient people don't let negative thoughts or events derail their efforts. They don't dwell on the negative or view themselves as victims. Resilient people do not spend time and energy on things they can't control. They are confident that they can survive; and optimistic that they may even thrive during change.

› **Spend your time and energy FOCUSED on things you can control.** Have a focused plan and spend energy on taking actions that help you and your team move toward the future. Resilient people are committed and confident in their goals and actions to move themselves and their team forward.

› **BELIEVE in yourself and the team.** You know you will eventually succeed, the change will be managed and implemented, and a new normal will prevail. Because of this belief, resilient people have courage to make tough decisions, to face difficult challenges, and to deliver unpopular news. They are able to take risks to move forward and will arrive at a better tomorrow.

› **CHOOSE YOUR RESPONSE to change.** Even in stressful situations, avoid being negative or panicked and instead opt for calm and logic. This means you need the awareness and ability to manage strong feelings and emotions, your own as well as those of others.

› **ORGANIZE by having a structured approach to managing ambiguity.** Thoughtfully set and explain realistic plans and priorities and develop specific action steps to carry them out. Organize your day to demonstrate your focused commitment to your plan. Practice assessing the risks about the change by listing all the pros and cons you can think of. Discuss with a trusted colleague or team members to identify obstacles of which you may not be aware.

› **Commit to being FLEXIBLE.** Accept that change is part of living. Your plan or goals may no longer be relevant or achievable as a result of things outside your control. Accept that fact and focus on what you can do. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on where you can take action.

› **Be PROACTIVE and ENGAGE in the change** as opposed to simply defending it. Apply lessons you have learned from past experiences and incorporate them in your plan.

Actions to Avoid

› Viewing the process of transition as permanent; it is a temporary thing.

› Seeing the crisis as an insurmountable problem.

› Letting the challenges and frustrations spill into other work or aspects of your life.

› Blaming yourself when things don't go well or when you have to take action you would rather avoid. There is much in our circumstances outside of our control.

Questions to Consider

› Have I been able to overcome obstacles, and if so, how?

› What has helped make me feel more hopeful about the future?

Building Resilience in Your Team

You are not only helping yourself through a change, you are guiding and supporting your team. Use these questions to reflect upon or in discussions with your team:

› What kinds of events have been most stressful for me?

› How have those events typically affected me?

› Have I found it helpful to think of important people in my life when I am distressed? How has that helped?

› To whom have I reached out for support in working through a traumatic or stressful experience?

› What have I learned about myself and my interactions with others during difficult times?

› Has it been helpful for me to assist someone else going through a similar experience?

End-of-Life Planning

During a pandemic, we found that many patients and caregivers were worried about what would happen to their families if they become sick with COVID-19. We wanted our patients and community to have the resources available to have the tough conversations that most of us don't want to even think about. We want to share them with you so that you might help your own teams navigate this important issue.

Advance directives are legal documents that provide written instructions about who can make medical decisions on your behalf and what your end-of-life wishes are.

Every adult has the right to direct his or her own medical care. Having an advance directive on file helps to ensure that you receive the care you want if a medical condition or injury renders you unable to make decisions or communicate. Cleveland Clinic recommends that every person age 18 and older have an advance directive document recorded in their electronic medical record. This gives you the opportunity to discuss and/or plan your healthcare preferences with your loved ones. There are many things that are out of our control in times of crisis; end-of-life planning is one way to take control.

Talk with your loved ones about your wishes

Talking about end-of-life issues is difficult, but it truly is a gift to your loved ones. If your family members are aware of your healthcare preferences in advance, it will alleviate uncertainties and disagreements when and if the time comes. We suggest using The Conversation Project (theconversationproject.org) to help guide you through discussing and thinking about your wishes/preferences, goals and values and completing your advance directive.

Notes

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic is continuously evolving as we learn more about the virus and the best techniques to address the associated risks. This guidance may change from time to time and should be used only as a general reference. Employers are solely responsible for determining the best practices to deploy within their work environments.

Please visit clevelandclinic.org/Covid19atwork for the latest updates or to request additional information.

About Cleveland Clinic

Cleveland Clinic is a nonprofit, multi-specialty academic medical center that integrates clinical and hospital care with research and education. Cleveland Clinic was founded in 1921 by four renowned physicians with a vision of providing outstanding patient care based upon the principles of cooperation, compassion and innovation. Today, Cleveland Clinic is one of the largest and most respected hospitals in the country. *U.S. News & World Report* consistently names Cleveland Clinic as one of the nation's best hospitals in its annual "America's Best Hospitals" survey. Each year thousands of patients travel to Cleveland Clinic from every state in the nation and more than 180 countries around the world.

Cleveland Clinic has been partnering directly with employers for more than 50 years with programs focused on executive health, wellness and expert second opinions. If you are interested in learning more about Cleveland Clinic's Employer Solutions, please visit: https://my.clevelandclinic.org/departments/employer-healthcare-solutions.

For more information about how to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, visit clevelandclinic.org/copingwithcovid19.

Cleveland Clinic