

# Guidelines for Leaders: Addressing Anxiety and Concerns of Staff

## Consideration:

- These guidelines can be used when leaders need guidance on stress management for staff, ranging from recognizing signs of stress to understanding the resources available to the DS sector, and scheduling activities within a calendar to keep the importance of stress management top-of-mind each week.

## The Mental Health Continuum

- The Mental Health Commission of Canada developed this Mental Health Continuum model to help employers understand mental health in the workplace and to show the spectrum of symptoms that colleagues can exhibit when dealing with mental health issues. Recognizing the stress levels of staff is the first step to providing the support needed to help staff deal with anxiety and concerns arising due to COVID-19.

	Low Stress		High Stress	
	Healthy	Reacting	Injured	Ill
Signs to Look For	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal mood fluctuations, calm, good humour</li> <li>• Few sleep difficulties</li> <li>• Good energy level, physically well</li> <li>• Performing well</li> <li>• Physically and socially active</li> <li>• Engages in collaboration and team work</li> <li>• Adapts to change well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impatience, irritability, nervousness, displaced sarcasm</li> <li>• Trouble sleeping</li> <li>• Tired, low energy, muscle tension, headaches</li> <li>• Procrastination, some difficulty concentrating</li> <li>• Decreased socializing, less physical engagement/activity</li> <li>• Decreased collaboration/teamwork</li> <li>• Irritability adapting to change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety, anger, negative attitude</li> <li>• Restless or disturbed sleep</li> <li>• Increased fatigue, aches/pains</li> <li>• Decreased/poor performance, poor concentrations/decisions</li> <li>• Social and physical avoidance</li> <li>• Resists collaboration/teamwork</li> <li>• Difficulty adapting to change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive anxiety, aggression, easily angered, pessimistic mood/thoughts</li> <li>• Unable to fall or stay asleep, sleeping too much/too little</li> <li>• Constant fatigue, exhaustion, physical illness</li> <li>• Unable to perform duties, lack of concentration, insubordination</li> <li>• Isolation, social/physical withdrawal</li> <li>• Avoiding collaboration/teamwork</li> <li>• Cannot adapt to change</li> </ul>
Potential Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead by example</li> <li>• Commit to communicating frequently</li> <li>• Create a “morale squad” that is in charge of developing strategies to keep staff morale high</li> <li>• Get to know employees</li> <li>• Foster healthy climate</li> <li>• Identify and resolve problems early</li> <li>• Deal with performance issues promptly</li> <li>• Demonstrate genuine concern</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for rest</li> <li>• Advocate</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch for behavior changes</li> <li>• Adjust workload as required</li> <li>• Know the resources &amp; how to access them</li> <li>• Reduce barriers to seek help</li> <li>• Encourage early access to care</li> <li>• Consult with human resources / medical resources as required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve mental health resources</li> <li>• Respect confidentiality</li> <li>• Minimize rumours</li> <li>• Respect medical employment limitations</li> <li>• Appropriately employ personnel</li> <li>• Maintain respectful contact</li> <li>• Involve members in social support</li> <li>• Seek consultation, as needed</li> <li>• Manage unacceptable behaviours</li> </ul>

Source: Mental Health Commission of Canada ([Link](#))

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## Stress Management Strategies and Resources Available

- The strategies and resources listed below are available to leaders and staff to help manage various aspects of stress (e.g. Mental health resources, Financial resources, PPE training)

### When staff raise concerns about their mental health or stress levels

#### Training and Courses

- Crisis Response Virtual Training – Mental Health Commission of Canada
  - [Caring for Yourself](#)
  - [Caring for Your Team](#)
  - [Caring for Others](#)
- [Wellness Together Canada](#) – Mental Health and Substance Use Support
  - A program that offers wellness self-assessments and tracking; self-guided courses, apps, and other resources; group coaching and community of support; counselling by text or phone.
- [BounceBack®](#) - Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)
  - A guided self-help program designed to help adults and youth 15+ manage low mood, mild to moderate depression and anxiety, stress or worry. Participants receive telephone coaching, skill-building workbooks and online videos to help them overcome these symptoms and acquire new skills to regain positive mental health.
- [Beacon](#)
  - A personalized course of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and digital therapy sessions with a registered therapist. Specific supports for frontline health workers are available.
- [AbilitiCBT](#)
  - Internet-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT) with specialized programs to help address anxiety symptoms related to the uniquely challenging aspects of pandemics: uncertainty, isolation, caring for family and communities, information overload, and stress management. A registered therapist is also available throughout the program.
- [The Science of Well-Being course](#) – Coursera, Yale University
  - A course designed to increase happiness and build more productive habits through various tasks. In preparation for these tasks, Professor Laurie Santos reveals misconceptions about happiness, annoying features of the mind that lead us to think the way we do, and the research that can help us change.

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## Stress Management Strategies and Resources Available (Continued)

### When staff raise concerns about their mental health or stress levels (Cont'd)

#### Wellness Events

- [30-minute mindfulness sessions for healthcare providers](#) – de Souza Institute
  - Every Monday to Thursday, free 30-minute mindfulness session are offered to healthcare providers.
- [ECHO coping with COVID](#) – CAMH and The University of Toronto
  - Healthcare providers and residents are invited to join ECHO sessions virtually to share and learn about ways to build resilience and overall wellness through didactic lectures and case-based discussions.
- [Virtual wellness events for the DS Sector](#) – Health Care Access Research and Developmental Disabilities
  - HCARDD is offering a series of virtual wellness events for people with developmental disabilities, their families, and staff. These events are free, online, and open to all.
- [Self-care webinars for DS professionals](#) – National Alliance for DSP
  - Self-care webinars for DSP in crisis, including meditation sessions, discussions of the role of the DSP, and grief and loss.
- [COVID-19 Town Hall series](#) – Anxiety Canada
  - Town halls with a panel of experts on topics, such as “Uncertainty: Returning to the New Normal and “Healthcare and Front-Line workers – How to Cope”.

#### Guides and Tools

- [Mental health meter self-assessment](#) – Canadian Mental Health Association
  - A questionnaire to help identify how mentally fit you are and which areas of mental health to focus on (e.g. Resilience, Balance, Self-Actualization).
- [Self-care and resilience guide](#) – Mental Health Commission of Canada
  - A guide to create a personal self-care and resilience plan to build self-care into the daily or weekly routine to improve resilience and prevent burnout.
- [Plan for resilience](#) – Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace
  - A resource to identify personal responses to stress and to build a personal resilience plan with healthy stress management strategies.
- [Developing your self-care plan](#) – University at Buffalo, School of Social Work
  - An article to help develop a personal self-care plan, by identifying what the individual values and needs as part of their day-to-day life (maintenance self-care) and the strategies that can employed when or a crisis arises (emergency self-care).
- [Build stress strategies plan](#) – Psychology Foundation of Canada
  - A personalized stress management plan that is created by answering a few questions and matching research-backed stress management strategies with the answers.

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## Stress Management Strategies and Resources Available (Continued)

### When staff raise concerns about their mental health or stress levels (Cont'd)

#### Articles for Stress Management

- [Resiliency in uncertain times](#) – Community Living Toronto
- [Emotional and psychological challenges faced by frontline health care providers during COVID-19 Pandemic](#) – Canadian Psychological Association
- [Tips for coping with COVID-19](#) – Morneau Shepell through Community Living Toronto
- [Seven steps to de-stress](#) – Medcan
- [10 things you can do right now to reduce anxiety, stress, worry related to COVID-19](#) – Canadian Mental Health Association and BounceBack
- [Physical activity, mental health, and motivation](#) – Canadian Psychological Association
- [Coping with stress and anxiety](#) – CAMH for Health Care Workers
- [Quarantine and self-isolation](#) – CAMH for Health Care Workers
- [Tips for health-care workers: How to get better sleep during COVID-19](#) – YourHealthMatters from Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
- [3 Steps to coping with anything including COVID 19](#) – Video for Healthcare workers posted by Community Living Toronto
- [Tips on talking to someone in crisis during COVID-19](#) – Mental Health Commission of Canada
- [Self-care and COVID-19: Getting ready for the marathon](#) – Psychology Today
- [Managing stress, anxiety, and substance use during COVID-19](#) (Infographic for healthcare providers) – Mental Health Commission of Canada and Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addictions
- [Resource for additional stress management articles](#) (e.g. How to Stop Worrying, Benefits of Mindfulness) – HelpGuide
- [Mental health & addictions articles](#) (e.g. Moving Beyond Anxiety, Improving Relationships) – Homewood Health

#### Staff Appreciation Activities

- Start a social media “Thank you” campaign from agency, media, local politicians ([DS sector social media graphics](#)).

#### Employee Morale

- Create a “morale squad” that is in charge of developing and implementing strategies to keep staff morale high (E.g. Car parade, positive news newsletter ([Sample](#)), gratitude journaling exercises ([Instructions](#))).
- Organize fun events for staff (e.g. weekly themed days such as PJ day, virtual sing-along).

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## Stress Management Strategies and Resources Available (Continued)

### When staff raise concerns about their mental health or stress levels (Cont'd)

#### Support Groups and Digital Therapists

- [Big White Wall](#)
  - Anonymous peer-to-peer support community that is free to all Ontario residents.
- [Ontario Caregiver Support Groups](#) – Ontario Caregiver Organization
  - List of support groups available for Caregivers.
- [Virtual Psychological Support Groups](#) – de Souza Institute
  - COVID-19 Virtual Psychosocial Support Groups for health care professionals in Ontario.
- [Huddle.care](#)
  - Free video-based peer support groups and substance use tracking around COVID-19.
- [Beacon](#)
  - A personalized course of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and digital therapy sessions with a registered therapist. Specific supports for frontline health workers are available.
- [AbilitiCBT](#)
  - Internet-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT) with specialized programs to help address anxiety symptoms related to the uniquely challenging aspects of pandemics: uncertainty, isolation, caring for family and communities, information overload, and stress management. A registered therapist is also available throughout the program.
- [ConnexOntario](#)
  - Free and confidential health services information for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental illness and/or gambling.
- [List of psychologists in Canada](#) – Canadian Psychological Association
  - Psychologists providing services at no charge to front-line health service providers.

### When staff raise concerns about finances

- [See list of government supports available](#)
- [Eckler's webinar: Managing through difficult times](#) (Create a personal financial plan) – Eckler
- [Financial resources for managing money, debt, and investments](#) – Government of Canada

### When staff express concerns about transmitting COVID-19 to their families/others in the community

- Provide accommodation to staff
- [7 Steps of hand hygiene video](#)

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## Stress Management Strategies and Resources Available (Continued)

### When staff raise concerns about their safety (e.g. PPE)

- Communicate to staff about actions that are being taken to ensure the accessibility to PPE.
- Provide training and other resources on the usage of PPE. The following resources are available on Real Xchange and/or are available from Public Health. Please note that your local Public Health Unit may have additional recommendations for the use of PPE:
  - [PPE procedures 2020 video](#) – Proper Use of PPE Training Video with Judy Endacott
  - [Putting on a gown and gloves video](#) - Public Health Ontario
  - [Putting on and taking off Personal Protective Equipment](#) – Public Health Ontario
  - [Quick guide: Removal \(doffing\) of PPE](#)
  - [Quick guide: Putting on \(donning\) PPE](#)
  - [7 Steps of hand hygiene video](#)
  - [PPE usage guidelines](#)
  - [PPE usage with suspected/confirmed COVID-19](#)
  - [Self-monitoring, self-isolation, and isolation for COVID-19](#) – Public Health Agency of Canada
  - [Use of respirators and other face coverings](#) – Sector Pandemic Plan Initiative (SPPI)

### When staff express concerns about childcare and/or caring for other dependents

- See list of government benefits and supports available
- [Find an emergency child care centre](#)
- [Caring for children in the COVID-19 crisis](#) – Canadian Mental Health Association
- [Talking to kids about COVID-19](#) – Anxiety Canada

### Additional resources for leaders

- [Explanation of the mental health continuum](#) – Medcan
- [Workplace dynamics during stressful times](#) – Morneau Shepell through Community Living Toronto
- [Best practices for supporting the mental health of healthcare workers during COVID-19](#) – Mental Health Commission of Canada
- [The psychological needs of healthcare staff as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic](#) – British Psychological Society Covid-19 Staff Wellbeing Group, posted by CAMH

# Sample 1: Calendar with Different Stress Management Activities Every Day

## Consideration:

- The calendar offers a variety of activities that can help manage the stress levels of staff.

Week 1	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain regular communications with staff through virtual face-to-face huddle and Q&amp;A</li> <li>Personal thank you to DS workers (e-mail), which includes stress management resources that staff can leverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate staff through Lunch &amp; Learn about Stress Management (e.g. signs to look for, techniques, resources available)</li> <li>Guide staff through mental health self-assessment as a tool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide resources for PPE training to reduce safety fears</li> <li>Communicate steps taken to increase accessibility of PPE (e-mail)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate staff about online tools available for them (i.e. stress management courses, teletherapy, support groups, webinars)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help staff feel connected through virtual social lunch/coffee with other staff</li> </ul>
Week 2	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank DS workers through social media posts from local politician, media, and agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate staff on developing a Self-Care Plan (learning session)</li> <li>Reduce stress through a Meditation and Mindfulness session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss grief and loss from the DSP perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate staff and leaders on creating a mentally healthy virtual work environment (back-office, managers, frontline)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host a fun event for staff: Virtual PJ day celebration</li> </ul>
Week 3	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank DS workers with a car parade in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate staff on financial management to reduce stress related to finances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk-through making most of agency benefit programs, government benefits, and EAP with staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise staff morale by sharing a recipe and encouraging team members to send recipes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share tips and resources for parents working at home and on the frontline</li> <li>Conduct mindfulness and resilience session for Families</li> </ul>
Week 4	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk staff through resilience building exercises (e.g. Gratitude Journaling)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss the importance of Physical Well-Being for Mental Well-Being with staff (session)</li> <li>Guide staff through a virtual work-out session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check-in with colleagues by talking to them to make sure they are doing well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise staff morale by sharing a favourite song and encouraging team members to send songs</li> <li>Host virtual sing-alongs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise employee morale by sharing a “good news” story</li> </ul>

# Sample 2: Calendar with Weekly Recurring Stress Management Activities

## Consideration:

- The previous calendar offers many ideas to address the stress and anxiety of staff. The calendar below was created by picking certain activities from the first calendar and repeating activities each week to create a routine of stress management activities.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maintain regular communications</b> with staff through video call</li> <li><b>Raise staff morale</b> by sending a personal thank you message to DS workers (e-mail)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Webinar:</b> Educate staff about stress management (webinar, lunch &amp; learn)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maintain regular communications</b> with staff through video call</li> <li>Raise employee morale by sharing a “good news” story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Check-in Thursday:</b> Talk to a colleague to make sure they are doing well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help staff feel connected through <b>virtual social lunch/coffee</b> with other staff</li> </ul>
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maintain regular communications</b> with staff through video call</li> <li><b>Raise staff morale</b> by sharing a recipe and encouraging staff to share their recipes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Webinar:</b> Educate staff about the importance of physical well-being for mental well-being through a virtual work-out session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maintain regular communications</b> with staff through video call</li> <li>Raise employee morale by sharing a “good news” story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Check-in Thursday:</b> Talk to a colleague to make sure they are doing well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help staff feel connected through <b>virtual social lunch/coffee</b> with other staff</li> </ul>
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maintain regular communications</b> with staff through video call</li> <li><b>Raise staff morale</b> by thanking DS workers through social media posts (agency, media, and/or local politician)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Webinar:</b> Educate staff about meditation and mindfulness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maintain regular communications</b> with staff through video call</li> <li>Raise employee morale by sharing a “good news” story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Check-in Thursday:</b> Talk to a colleague to make sure they are doing well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help staff feel connected through <b>virtual social lunch/coffee</b> with other staff</li> </ul>
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maintain regular communications</b> with staff through video call</li> <li><b>Raise staff morale</b> by sharing a favourite song and encouraging team members to send songs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Webinar:</b> Educate staff about financial management and resources available (e.g. government benefits)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maintain regular communications</b> with staff through video call</li> <li>Raise staff morale by sharing a “good news” story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Check-in Thursday:</b> Talk to a colleague to make sure they are doing well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help staff feel connected through <b>virtual social lunch/coffee</b> with other staff</li> </ul>
	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20

# Template for Stress Management Calendar

## Consideration:

- As in the previous calendars, you can chose activities that are manageable and impactful for your agency and mark them in the calendar below to create your own stress management calendar.

Week 1	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Week 2	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Week 3	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
Week 4	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20