

Stress Management for Managers during COVID-19

As we all navigate our way through the uncharted waters of COVID-19, here are some suggestions for managers and leaders to help themselves and their team members cope along the way.

Stress Management Ideas for Managers [As a manager, how can I take care of myself so I can be as effective as possible for my team?]

1. **Nurture yourself.** You cannot be effective if you are working endlessly. Self-care is important so you can think clearly, manage your own emotions and prioritize issues as they come up. This is hard to do if you are continually exhausted and exasperated.
2. **Focus on what you can control.** Identify what items you can do something about, the ones you can't and the ones you are just going to have to wait and see on.
3. **Be present for today.** Focus on make the best decisions you can today and being present with your team members and your family today – avoid temptation of looking too far ahead about what you don't know.
4. **Make time for family and friends.** Prioritize quality time with those you care about. This is an important reminder of what is really most valuable in your life and helps you maintain proper perspective.
5. **Spend time talking with supportive, encouraging people.** Minimize exposure to those who seem to exacerbate your stress. (Avoid talking to someone who is more stressed out than you are.)
6. **Stay organized.** Keep a notebook (on paper or on your phone) that allows you to write down thoughts and things to remember so they do not absorb your focus and create anxiety.
7. **Exercise regularly.** Make a daily habit of physical activity and relaxation time. Physical activity boosts your mood, lowers stress, and improves the way your body feels. This has a direct impact on the way your mind is able to function and cope.
8. **Maintain a proper schedule.** Keeping a healthy routine around sleep improves your mood, your energy and your ability to handle stress and to think clearly. Use some calming techniques such as deep breathing, meditation or prayer to help manage any racing thoughts that interfere with your sleep.

Valuing Your Team When the Future is Uncertain [How can I lower the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among my team members when I don't know what's going to happen next, myself?]

1. **Identify the needs of your team.** They are more than just parts of your business. Sometimes they are not even aware of what they need, especially with a new situation. Don't wait on them to bring their needs to your attention. Think through how you would feel in their place.
2. **Be transparent.** Avoiding conversations because you don't have all the answers only leads to your team imagining the worst-case-scenario. Try to find a balance between not sharing anything and over-sharing. You don't want to unnecessarily raise their anxiety either.
3. **Think about the end result.** Focus on what you want your business or team to be like once this is all over. Hopefully, a more unified, effective, and dedicated team. (Because you were **LOYAL** to them when loyalty was not easy.)
4. **Be vulnerable with your team.** (You and your team are **in this together**. Share the burden with your team as equitably as possible.)
5. **Value every member of your team.** As much as can be helped, try to avoid having one small group of staff bear the brunt of the negative consequences (excess work or no work). You don't want anyone feeling as though they were tossed overboard to save the ship.
6. **Express appreciation.** (Recognize team members' extra effort, stress, patience, dedication.)
7. **Tell them what you know.** If there is something you can share that will help your team deal with their anxiety, then consider sharing it. (e.g., how do you think the CARES Act will affect your business?)
8. **Share any optimism you have.** Is there an opportunity hidden in all of this that you can be optimistic about? Is it forcing you to develop new skills or to branch out? Share your vision of anything positive with your team.
9. **Encourage your team to focus on what they can control.**
10. **Treat each person as an individual** (Making blanket statements is not enough.) Demonstrate genuine concern for your team individually. Encourage your team to take care of themselves mentally and emotionally.
11. **Consider deviating from your normal way of doing things.** Examine additional ways to **veer from your normal** ways of doing things in order to make this time more tolerable for your team – sharing information more openly, allowing more

freedom regarding stress management, downtime, personal support from others, child care, etc.

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