

## Caring for Yourself – First!

Caring for ourselves, also means being acutely aware of how our own families are coping at home, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have been sharing stories of their family's well-meaning concern, ranging from gentle questions to outright fear and worry about transmission. Once staff return to their homes at the end of their shifts? That's when family members put into words what they have been hearing from the media all day long. Yes, most family members are practicing social distancing, with their TVs or laptops turned on. The statistics about infection rates, in especially hard-hit New York and New Jersey may dominate the conversation. All this has a direct impact upon staff who are saying, "It is hard to come home from the hospital once my shift is over, – my family doesn't always want me to come in to work," and "What can I say to them, this is what I do, I have to help our patients."

Family distress can certainly escalate, especially when we're all living together for prolonged periods of time.

Given the situation, some health care workers have chosen to self-isolate, or send their families away to stay with relatives. All this adds to the disruption in social support that we all need, especially from our loved ones, in this time of the Coronavirus pandemic.

## What To Do

#1 – It's okay to feel anxious; a certain amount is definitely normal. However, the best way to conquer fear is with knowledge and information and recognize that yes, this will be temporary! DO set a limit on overall media consumption, and listen or watch in limited doses and only then, from reliable sources, such as:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>; <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/tpics/ncov.shtml>; or <http://njha.com/coronavirus>.

#2 – Make sure that you and your family members are eating scheduled, healthy, well-balanced meals and staying away from snacks, high sugar, and too much alcohol. Is your family staying physically active? Make sure they get enough exercise, sleep and rest. Have them FaceTime, Zoom or Skype with friends and loved ones, apart from the family they are home with all day long. Social connections are key!

#3 – Information: Speak about your day at work in small, "sound bites," without unnecessary details that may escalate worry and concerns for your own and their own safety. In fact, avoid talking about the number of patients you care for, how sick they may be, etc. If you need to talk yourself for support – we have resources here and through Atlantic Health System that are geared specifically for our outstanding caregivers, YOU!

#4 – Sanitizing: Be sure that your family knows that you are taking every possible precaution to protect yourself and them from infection. Talk and role model: Frequent handwashing, laundering clothing, wiping down objects, counters and household items with disinfectants, social distancing!

#5 – Fun! Build in some social "solidarity" as well as "down-time!" Connect frequently with family and friends via Skype or Zoom for family game night, movie sharing or just plain sharing with one another. Foster a spirit of family solidarity, hope, patience and optimism. We will get through this together!

#6 - Children have special needs. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network has a free guide for parents and caregivers to help families cope. (See [nctsn.org](http://nctsn.org) for details). Make sure that distance learning opportunities are offered at schools, at resources such as [Scholastic.org](http://Scholastic.org) and a wide variety of virtual museum tours and even live concerts and Broadway (See [BroadwayDirect.com](http://BroadwayDirect.com)) shows.

## Resources

CONCERN is available, every day - 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM @ 800-242-7371 for anyone experiencing anxiety or stress related to COVID-19.

Dr. Mary Ann Donohue-Ryan is also available xxx-xxx-xxxx and is on site Monday – Thursday @ xxx-xxx-xxxx, as well as either Saturday/Sunday mornings.

Stay connected: Check out *Workplace* for more tips on improving your own coping style. Also, continue to access the [COVID-19 Updates and Information on Workplace](#)

## There's Still Time!

CONCERN and Integrative Care and Creative Arts at Carol G. Simon Cancer Centers, Healing Culture Council and The AHS Integrative Medicine are offering the following remaining classes as part of the COVID-19 AHS Employee Resiliency and good Mental Health Program, hosted on the CONCERN Workplace page: Week of April 6<sup>th</sup> (Music as a resource for renewal and stress relief); Week of April 13<sup>th</sup> (QiCong learn simple techniques to reduce stress); Week of April 20 (Breathing techniques for calmness throughout the day).

“Weeping may endure during the night, but joy cometh in the morning” Psalm 30:5

## Telepsych Visits:

- CONCERN EAP is providing supportive, confidential, therapy sessions telephonically. Your benefit entitles you and your household family members to 1-12 sessions at no cost. If an appointment is needed for medication, the clinician will help you with a referral. Call Concern at 973-451-0025.

## CONCERN on [Workplace](#)

- Weekly live streaming and recorded short meditations
- AHS Spiritual Care chaplains, spiritual leaders and educators will offer daily spiritual inspiration, tips and resources from various faith traditions.
- Weekly tips on recovering from trauma and resilience

## myStrength - free app for all AHS staff

- Access personalized resources to improve your mood. Visit [www.myStrength.com](http://www.myStrength.com) and click on “Sign-up.” Access Code: AHSstaffwellness.

## CONCERN audio meditations, mindfulness videos, and mental health moments [podcasts](#)

## Daily virtual workouts on [Workplace](#)

- Join Atlantic Rehabilitation trainers for some quick exercises you can do in a variety of settings focused on stretching, yoga, high intensity interval training (HIIT), and more. For all ages and fitness levels—get the whole family involved!

