Self Care during the Covid 19 outbreak

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In the current context, you may feel responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the people you are serving. You may witness or hear about suffering and fears. You, your family or friends may be directly affected. Some of you may be avoided by others due to stigma or fear. All this has effects on you and your colleagues. It is quite normal to feel under pressure, inadequate or frustrated, sad, stressed, confused, angry or scared in such a situation. It does *not* mean that you are weak or cannot do your job. It *does* mean that you need to take care of yourself in order to maintain personal wellbeing, effectiveness and how you work with others.

Your wellbeing is a priority!

Make sure to be well before responding to a crisis, take care of yourself and regularly monitor for any symptoms of distress, such as changes in your health, mood or behavior. If you feel overwhelmed by the situation, seek professional help e.g. from a health worker or counsellor.

Be aware of your limits. Focus on what is in your realm of expertise and influence. Know when to refer to or speak to a supervisor. It is a sign of professionalism to seek for support and decline any task that exceeds your knowledge, skills or personal capacity. Regularly reflect on what you did well, what did not go very well, and the limits of what you could do in the circumstances. Accept that there are situations where you cannot help.

Connect with colleagues and regularly check in with each other. Seek support from more experienced colleagues and talk with them (rather than with your family or friends) about difficult situations and cases. Be supportive to each other and communicate constructively and optimistically, also in stressful moments. Remember that everyone reacts differently to challenging situations.

Protect yourself and stay informed. Stay updated on accurate information on Covid 19 and prevention measures. Follow the protection guidelines and use protective equipment. Learn about symptoms of stress, stress management and positive coping strategies. Learn about and connect to available social and professional support systems.
Find credible sources and be aware of misinformation and rumors. Limit the time you check for updates.

Establish and keep a work routine with reasonable working hours, a daily schedule and regular breaks. Physically (or, if in home office, at least symbolically) separate your work from your private life.

Make use of professional support systems. Supervision, collegial support, buddy systems, and others are particularly important in stressful contexts. Don't hesitate to seek further help, if needed.

Plan for personal time and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Eat, drink, sleep and exercise regularly. Whenever possible, find time to do activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Think about what has helped you cope in the past, such as physical, brain, leisure and family activities. Stay in touch with family, friends and loved ones (also virtually/ by phone). Don't feel guilty for taking time-outs - they will help you renew your energy. Avoid using harmful coping strategies such as tobacco, alcohol or other drugs.

Compliment yourself and each other. Remind yourself that your work matters for many people. Appreciate what you were able to do and what you achieved, even if it may not seem very significant to you in this moment. Find opportunities to amplify positive and hopeful stories.