

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support During COVID-19 Outbreak

from the **Philippine Council for Mental Health**

PROMOTE PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING AMONG THE TEAM OF FRONTLINE WORKERS AND THEIR AGENCIES AND SUPERVISORS

1



Frontliners should be allowed to express their fears and apprehensions.

Their work is tough and highly stressful and much is expected of them at this time. The demands on frontline health workers can stretch the limits of human endurance. They blame themselves for not doing enough and push themselves to work harder. In helping them recognize these, they should be guided to see that these psychosocial reactions of frustrations, sadness, disillusionment, anger, etc. are expected and can be considered “normal”.

2



Recognizing their hard work during this crisis is important.

This includes, at the very least, ensuring they have all they need to carry -out their work properly and efficiently – including providing them with personal protective equipment and ensuring that appropriate protocols are in place to keep them safe. Leaders and supervisors are encouraged to recognize the vital contributions of frontline health workers to the positive resolution of this crisis. They should listen to their concerns; give them credit for their diligence, commitment, initiative, innovativeness and personal sacrifices in the conduct of their duties. Providing appropriate incentives will help make these expressions of support more tangible.

3



Frontliners need to be given time to take care of their own basic needs too.

They must be able to rest and recover from work through regular shift schedules, and encouraged to engage in physical activity, spend quality time with loved ones, pray or find quiet time with themselves, eat healthy food, and sleep well during breaks from work.

4



Frontliners may be subjected to stigma due to the nature of their work at this time, notwithstanding their possible exposure to the virus itself.

They may experience stigma from different sectors of society – even among their own families, close friends, co-workers and law enforcers. This will make an already challenging and stressful situation worse and can interfere with their ability to serve. We must care for them as we would any member of our society.

5



Finding time to reflect is important to maintaining positive mental health.

Drawing on skills and resources that have helped during past crises can help in managing the current crisis and minimizing the negative impact of stress on psychosocial well-being.

6



Frontliners are encouraged to be open to accept help from a friend whom they trust or seek a mental health professional and not be afraid that they will be judged as a failure or a mental patient.

Feelings of guilt arising from thoughts that one has not done enough can worsen the stress. This can feel very overwhelming. Changes in mood, such as feeling anxious, irritable or low and tired all the time, may make it difficult to relax even outside work. Confiding with someone being trusted or talking to a mental health professional will help process these feelings.

7



Policies and protocols of hospitals and other agencies involved in the frontlines should recognize and prevent burnout.

This is a common consequence of extreme stress. Work schedules and assignments and appropriate referral systems should be in place to ensure the provision of mental health and psychosocial support.

*“Our connectedness with each other,
not our differences is what matters
now more than ever.”*

Produced by **HUMAN** - the NGO Coalition for Mental Health in support of the
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