



Officer Wellness and Resiliency During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic presents unique challenges for law enforcement officers and deputies. During this time, you should prioritize your mental and physical wellness.

Stress During a Pandemic

- It is important to remember that everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How an individual might respond depends on their background and personality, as well as the community they live in. First responders may react more strongly to a crisis such as COVID-19 due to the responsibility of maintaining public safety, the risk of exposure through interactions with the community, and the concern of exposing family members to the virus, among other stressors.

Pay Attention to Your Emotional Health

- With the evolving nature of this crisis upending daily routines and adding stress to everyday life, it is essential to pay attention to your mental and emotional health. Taking care of your health can help you think clearly and react to urgent needs in a timely manner, both at work and at home. While the current situation may seem overwhelming and out of control, focusing on the things you can control can help reduce stress.

How to Mitigate Stress and Cope with Changes and Uncertainty

- **Stay informed** by learning the most up to date facts about COVID-19 and understanding the steps you need to take at home and on the job to protect yourself and your family from catching or spreading the virus.
- **Take care of your body** by maintaining healthy habits such as eating nutritious food, exercising regularly, and getting plenty of sleep as well as steering clear of nicotine and excessive alcohol intake.
- **Connect with others** by maintaining social relationships with those close to you. Set aside time to connect virtually or over the phone to keep your support system informed and strong. To stay connected with the community you serve, consider using social media or virtual town halls.

- **Practice mindfulness** by taking short breaks to reset and recognize what you need to do to cope with your emotions. Mindfulness activities include finding time for yourself, practicing deep breathing, and participating in activities that you normally enjoy.
 - Exercise or go for a walk
 - Watch a movie
 - Listen to music
 - Read a book
 - Spend time with loved ones
 - Meditate or practice yoga
 - Be creative through art
 - Keep a journal of your thoughts
- **Avoid too much exposure to news** by taking a break from news updates related to COVID-19, this includes social media too. Staying informed is important, but too much information can become overwhelming and impact overall family wellness at home. Limit your exposure to news updates by refraining from turning on the news at home or setting a time frame where you will disconnect from news for the day.
- **Seek help when needed** by talking with those around you, such as your fellow officers, command staff, executive leadership, chaplains, family, a psychologist, and anyone you can confide in.¹ Remember that you are not alone.

Following a natural disaster, **12%** of individuals with low social support developed PTSD compared to **2.5%** of individuals with high social support.²

¹ <https://emergency.cdc.gov/ coping/ selfcare.asp>

Be Mindful of Those Around You

- If you feel edgy or stressed, those around you are too. Remember to practice empathy and compassion and support others because they might respond to stress differently than you.
- Having patience is important for both the officer and their loved ones. The day-to-day law enforcement job stressors, coupled with anxiety from family members about their loved one in the field or coping with additional family members and children in the home, can enhance the already-existing worries associated with COVID-19. Remind yourself to be patient and listen to one another.
 - Deliberate breathing can reduce negative feelings including hostility, guilt, and irritability and reduce physiological markers of stress.³
- Check on those in your support system, because even while stuck in tight quarters or out on the streets, it may become difficult to stay connected to colleagues, family, and friends.
 - Among police, social support from colleagues is associated with less psychological distress in the face of traumatic events.⁴

- Life right now is fundamentally different, so practicing gratitude can pay dividends. Focus on the good in your life and not the negatives that are out of your control.⁵
 - Keeping a gratitude journal has been shown to increase well-being while significantly lowering depressive symptoms.⁶

Agency and Community Resources



Reflecting daily on what you are grateful for can help people to sleep **31** minutes longer per night.⁷

2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17606382>
3 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28626434>
4 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25476966>
5 <http://www.mindfuljunkie.com/>

6 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16045394>
7 https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/images/application_uploads/Emmons-CountingBlessings.pdf