



## COLORADO

Disease Control and  
Public Health Response

Department of Public Health & Environment

# Self Care Guide

As Colorado and the world face the largest and most impactful pandemic in recent memory with SARS-CoV-2, those who are actively involved in response efforts MUST consider personal sustainability. Culturally, we tend to live life in the “red zone”. That is, we tend to push ourselves and live our lives “under the gun” – we are over-scheduled, over-worked and exhausted. Yet, life has thrown a curve ball that has ratcheted up the “stress”. Events like this COVID-19 Pandemic require us to “step it up a notch” or two or twenty. Our current work requires flexibility, awareness, an ability to be calm, implement crisis emotional intelligence, and an ability to process complex information. Research demonstrates that those who plan, train, maintain skills, have adequate resources, know their own history and understand those components of life that are most difficult for them, will be able to maintain a higher level of effective professionalism and be more protected from the negative consequences of extreme stress. In addition, research shows that those who seek meaning in their work, reach out to care for others and seek support are also significantly better at maintaining their resilience. Thus the work we are doing in protecting Coloradoans is actually a protective factor.

So what do you need to do to assure that you can “get through it”? This Self Care Guide is designed to help you identify what you can do for yourself and your families, supporting your continued efforts at meeting the challenges that we collectively face with COVID-19.

### **Planning:**

Its never too late to plan. Since we are fully engaged in addressing the COVID-19 threat, it is important for each of us to plan for the long-term work and its impact. What needs do you need to plan to address both for yourself and for your family? In addition, as a leader in the response, what planning do you need to do in relationship to the teams you work within? Contingency action plans, communication plans, family plans etc all will help you think clearly, engage in problem solving, develop solutions, maintain focus and regulating your emotional response. Planning in general is the antidote to the decreased “executive functioning” that happens in the face of stress and overwhelm. Since “planning” is a constant, identifying your specific strengths and challenges is a part of the process.

### Ask yourself: What are my strengths?

1. What do I bring to the table for the response and for supporting the recovery of our communities? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What are my physical strengths? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are my emotional strengths? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What are my relationship strengths? \_\_\_\_\_
  5. What are my intellectual strengths? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. What are my spiritual strengths? \_\_\_\_\_
  7. What skills do I have that may come in handy during this crisis?  
Work Related? \_\_\_\_\_  
Non-work Related? (hobbies, previous career's, misc skills) \_\_\_\_\_
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Without forethought and planning, a person is much more vulnerable to the chaos and challenges that accompany any emergency. Consider what situations or emergencies you do well in, and which ones you may be more vulnerable to becoming quickly overloaded, overwhelmed or overexposed. This “knowledge of self” is an important part of being prepared on an individual level.

Ask yourself: *What is likely to be my greatest challenge?*

### **Stress Management**

There is a lot of information about stress management, not all of it useful. While we know that being able to manage stress is a good idea, we often do not fully understand WHY, or even how. Stated in a nutshell, stress drastically reduces your ability to think, problem solve, plan, or process new information. Managing your stress mitigates that impact.

The basics of stress management are:

1. Decrease caffeine;
2. Balance nutrition – eat your veggies and fruit
3. Move – even 5 min walk around the worksite is helpful
4. Protect and increase sleep – turn off the TV (actually all Screens) 30 before bed.
5. Take breaks;
6. Build in down time and leisure;
7. Maintain your expectations of yourself and others
8. Re-frame your perceptions positively;
9. Talk about your experiences;
10. Laugh - Incorporate humor into life and work.

The following is a **Sustainability Plan** that **IF** you take the time to think about and complete will have a direct and positive impact on your abilities throughout our battle against COVID-19. We need YOU, so please take the steps necessary to keep your valuable contributions sustainable.

# My Sustainability Plan

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- |   | Completed                              |
|---|--|
| A. Family Communications Plan                           | <input type="checkbox"/>               |
| B. Family Emergency Plan                                | <input type="checkbox"/>               |
| C. Response Kits (Check each separately when completed) | Personal/Home <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   | Car <input type="checkbox"/>           |
|   | Work <input type="checkbox"/>          |
| D. Identified Strengths and Skill Sets(List Here)       | <input type="checkbox"/>               |
| E. Identified Challenges (List Here)                    | <input type="checkbox"/>               |
| F. Stress Management Plan                               | <input type="checkbox"/>               |
- Address the next 7 items to help you address the natural stress of this response.

1. How do you know that you are stressed? List five symptoms (thoughts, feelings, body sensations or behaviors) that tell you that you are stressed.

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2. Make a list of things that help you relax (ex: music, taking a walk, reading, comedy/laughter, talking with a friend or co-worker):

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3. Make a list of things that you need to avoid (and that you would likely do without consideration) that will only add to your stress and are not helpful to your work? (ex: caffeine, too much media, sitting the whole day/shift, taking on other's tasks, etc).

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4. We all need to talk about our experiences from time to time. Who are the top five people you can go talk to during or after the crisis?

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5. What can others do for you when you are stressed? List five things:

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6. How can you tell others what you need? How will you let them know?

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7. The following areas are daily things that we either do or don't do that impact our ability to respond to emergencies. Following each one, rank how well you do in that area (1= very poor, 10 = Excellent) and then write out one action you can take to improve the area by one point.

Nutrition                    1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
 What you can do:

Sleep                        1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
 What you can do:

Manage Workload        1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
 What you can do:

Balanced Lifestyle      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
 What you can do:

Stress Management     1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
 What you can do:

Having Fun                1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
 What you can do:

Social Network          1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
 What you can do:

Exercise (30 min/day)1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
 What you can do: