



A Message from the York Region CISM Team

With the rapid spread of COVID-19 around the world, our country has taken unprecedented measures to protect us. However, because of the nature of your job you are at the forefront and helping those in need. Unlike the controlled environments in a health care facility, first responders are faced with unique challenges including variable workplace settings, enclosed space during transport, and frequent need for rapid decisions on limited information. These are the things first responders endure to help protect and care for our community.

Despite the education and procedures that each of your workplaces have devised to help protect and inform you, we know that in times of uncertainty, feelings of anxiety are not uncommon. We are all human and it is natural to worry about the well-being of our family and loved ones.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. Not everyone will react to this outbreak the same way. We must be respectful and gentle with each other's responses. Some common stress responses during COVID-19 may include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Anyone with pre-existing mental health conditions should continue with treatment and always be mindful of any new or worsening symptoms. Taking care of yourself can help you cope with the stress. The healthier you are, the better able you will be to help and support others.

Here are some suggestions that you can do to support yourself:

- Take breaks from the pandemic by not reading, watching or listening to the news, including social media.
- Take care of your body through occasional deep breathing, stretching, or meditation.
- Try to eat well-balanced meals, exercise, get plenty of sleep, and avoid drugs and alcohol.
- Take time to unwind. Don't be hard on yourself or your kids about an increase in screen time.
- Connection is important and necessary to mental wellness. Connect with others by talking to people you trust about your worries or concerns.
- If you happen to be quarantined, use FaceTime or Skype to get more connection than just over text or the phone.
- For those of you who work in a group or with a partner, keep an eye on each other. Check in with one another. Be each other's support!

We hope this information helps. Please feel free to connect with any of our CISM Team members if you have any worries or concerns.