

CHECKING OUR MENTAL HEALTH VITAL SIGNS



We physicians tend to take care of others before ourselves, especially in an emergency. When we spring into action, nothing can stop us.

But it's important to take time to slow down, take a break to reconnect with ourselves, and focus on our own physical and mental health. Knowing the signs to watch out for can help to prevent burnout.

Checking in with ourselves is the first step toward building resilience.

A handy self-evaluation tool

The Mental Health Continuum allows us to take our mental health vitals at a glance. Used **daily**, it can help us keep our balance during periods of prolonged stress or after a difficult event.

Wherever we fall on the continuum—even if it changes day to day—the important thing is to provide ourselves with the means to get back into the green zone.

THE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM

	HEALTHY	REACTING	AT RISK	CRITICAL
SIGNS	Calm and steady	Occasional anxiety or sadness	Persistent anxiety or sadness	Excessive anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts
	Sense of humour	Irritability or pessimism	Angry or cynical	Angry outbursts or aggression
	Mentally alert	Forgetfulness or intrusive thoughts	Indecision, poor concentration	Unable to concentrate
	Sleeping well	Difficulty sleeping	Sleep disturbances, nightmares	Significant sleep disturbances or oversleeping
	Performing consistently	Feeling overworked or procrastinating	Feeling overwhelmed, poor performance	Unable to complete work tasks
	Confident in self and others	Self-doubt	Distrusts others	Excessive distrust
	Feeling good	Tension or headaches	Persistent physical symptoms	More serious physical symptoms
	Good energy levels	Low energy	Fatigue	Exhaustion
	Physically active	Reduced physical activity	Physically inactive	Lethargic
	Socially active*	Reduced social contacts*	Avoiding social contacts*	No contact with loved ones*
	Substance use is occasional and social	Substance use is regular but controlled	Substance use is difficult to control	Substance abuse or dependence
STRATEGIES	Maintain current activities	Recover: slow down and rest	Acknowledge the need for action	Consult a professional immediately
	Practice mindfulness	Build mental health toolkit	Recover: eliminate non-essential tasks	Reach out to peers or someone you trust*
	Cultivate social relationships*	Identify problems	Reach out to peers	Consider a leave of absence from work
		Act on things that can be changed	Maintain contact with loved ones*	Rekindle close relationships*

* During physical distancing, phone calls or video chats are effective ways to keep in touch with family and friends.

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