

Stress Management in Crisis

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EDUCATIONAL MEETING**



What is Stress?

If you are a human with a functional brain and bodily system, you experience stress.

- Stress can be viewed as a two edged sword: eustress and distress.
- Eustress is *good stress*.
 - Provides the necessary tension for one to get up and moving to take care of all activities of daily living.
 - Motivating feeling that keeps one working toward a goal or a purpose.
 - It usually involves anticipation, excitement, and elation.
- Distress is *bad stress*
 - Makes the world feel overwhelming-
 - Things may seem too much or too difficult to do,
 - Often involves worry, anxiety, and anger.

What is a Crisis?

- W Thomas(1909): described Crisis as a ***threat, a challenge, a strain on the intention, a call to new action.***
- A crisis has also been characterized as a time of ***intense difficulty, trouble, or danger*** that put things out of balance
 - Crises have generally been thought to be ***self limiting***, and the individual experiencing the crisis will adjust post crisis with coping mechanisms either:
 - Below pre-crisis levels
 - At pre-crisis levels
 - Better then pre-crisis levels
- Crises can be on the **individual level** (i.e. illness, death, job lost) or **external** as with the COVID-19 pandemic
- The Crisis precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic suggests the need to revisit the self limiting perception of the nature of a crisis

Interplay of Crisis and Stress

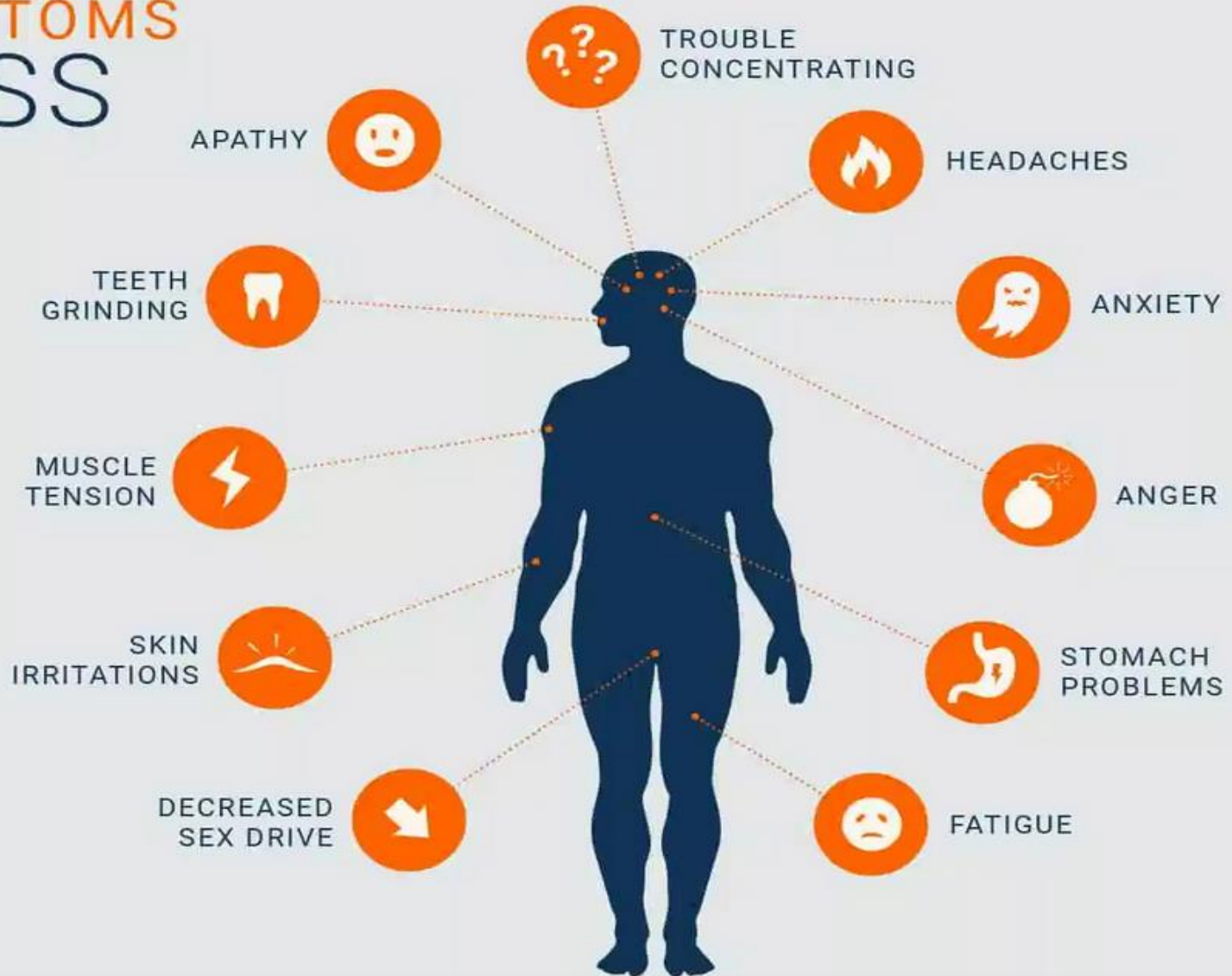
Nurses are showing the courage to practice their calling during a time of crisis and great risk, knowing they are not immune.

- Circumstances that can bring about stress vary depending on care settings.
 - Those in acute care settings may have a frantic work pace and take few or no breaks.
 - There may be fear of getting sick and bringing the virus home to family.
 - There may be concern for adequate amounts of medicines, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other equipment.
- There are great triumphs when patients recover and little victories when patients die
- The struggle is real, this crisis is not over, and the fight or flight stress response takes its' toll physically and emotionally.

Important to be Mindful of Ones Stress Response

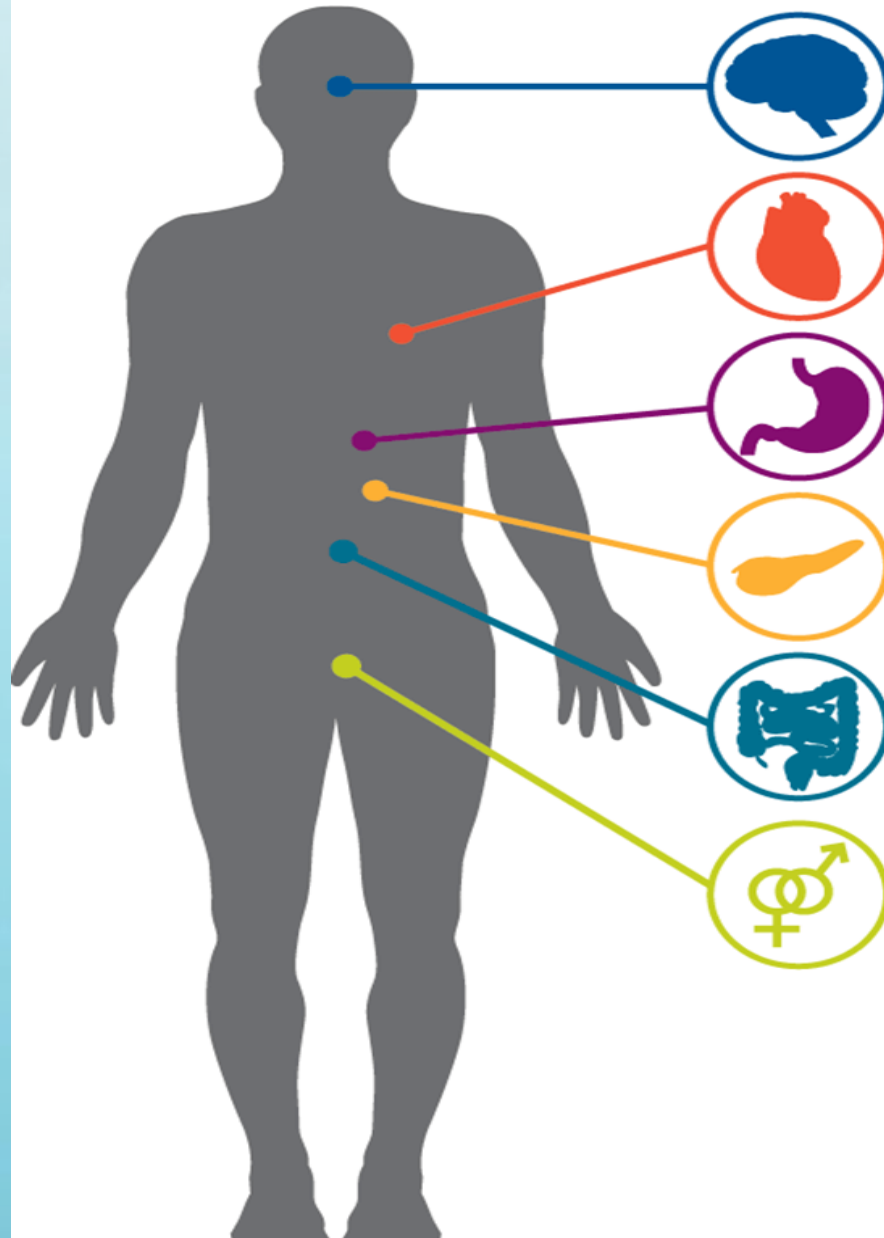
Recognizing

THE SYMPTOMS of STRESS



Stress Symptoms Linked to Body Areas

Effects of Stress on the Body



Brain and Nerves: Headaches, feelings of despair, lack of energy, sadness, nervousness, anger, irritability, trouble concentrating, memory problems, difficulty sleeping, mental health disorders (anxiety, panic attacks, depression, etc.)

Heart: Faster heartbeat or palpitations, rise in blood pressure, increased risk of high cholesterol and heart attack

Stomach: Nausea, stomach ache, heartburn, weight gain, increased or decreased appetite

Pancreas: Increased risk of diabetes

Intestines: Diarrhea, constipation and other digestive problems

Reproductive Organs: For women-irregular or painful periods, reduced sexual desire. For men-impotence, low sperm production, reduced sexual desire

Other: Acne and other skin problems, muscle aches and tension, increased risk for low bone density and weakened immune system (making it harder to fight off or recover from illnesses)

This is what stress can look/feel like



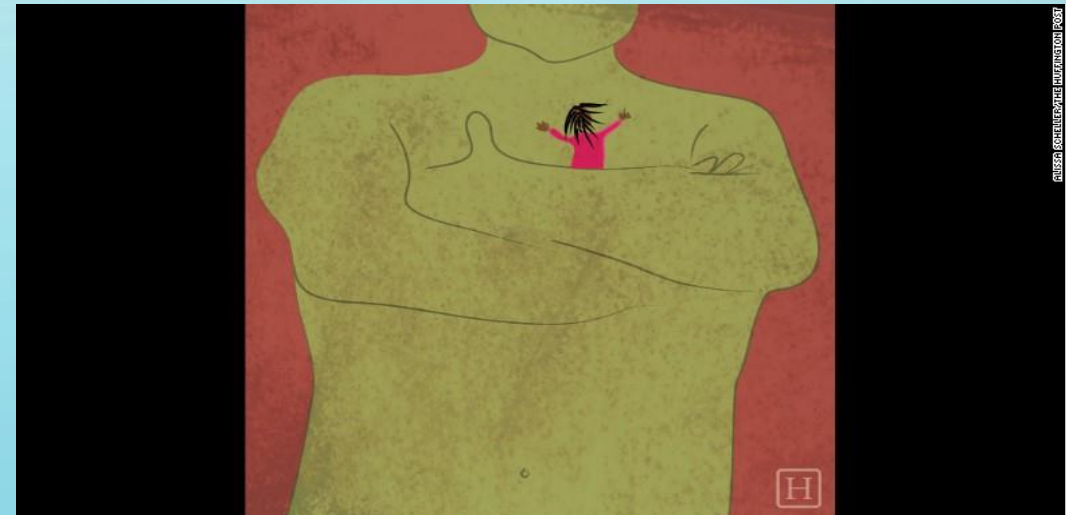
"Like a huge knot in my stomach."



"It feels like being caught in a tsunami... the wave keeps you from figuring out which way to swim"



"It feels like the walls are closing in. A vice grip on my body."



"Stress is like being hugged by a giant."

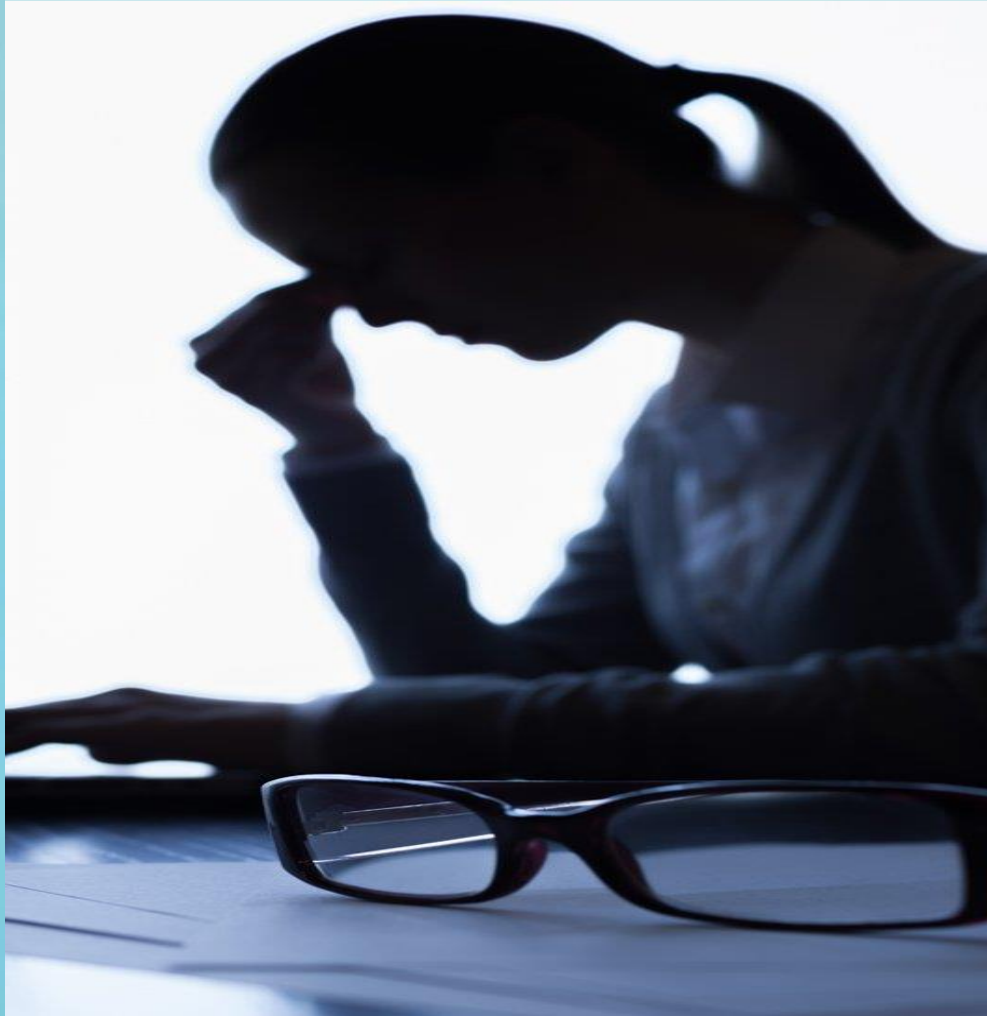
Common Signs of Stress

Do you recognize any of these behaviors in your co-workers?

- ***Agitation:*** uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated or moody
- ***Hopelessness:*** seems overcome with hopelessness or overwhelmed by their circumstances
- ***Withdrawal:*** isolate themselves from other people
- ***Personality change:*** sudden or gradual change of the way someone behaves
- ***Self-neglect:*** stop taking care of themselves or engage in risky behavior

Important to identify excessive workplace stress

Reflect on whether you are:



- Just going through the motions, feeling like a zombie, and working extra.
- Becoming cynical, disconnected, less caring, or distancing from your team.
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Avoiding exercise outside of work
- Not eating healthy food or hydrating enough.
- Increasing usage of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs.
- Experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed and worrying that you will fall sick.
- Not able to meet your daily tasks.

Work Place Advocacy

Nurses do not work in isolation.

- The health care system is interdependent.
- Seek institutional responses/actions that can reduce the inherent stress that COVID-19 brings. Advocate for:
 - Adequate quantities of PPE
 - Appropriate training on use of PPEs
 - Regular virus testing
 - Open communication
 - Regular debriefings to process particularly distressing events
 - Easy access to EAP

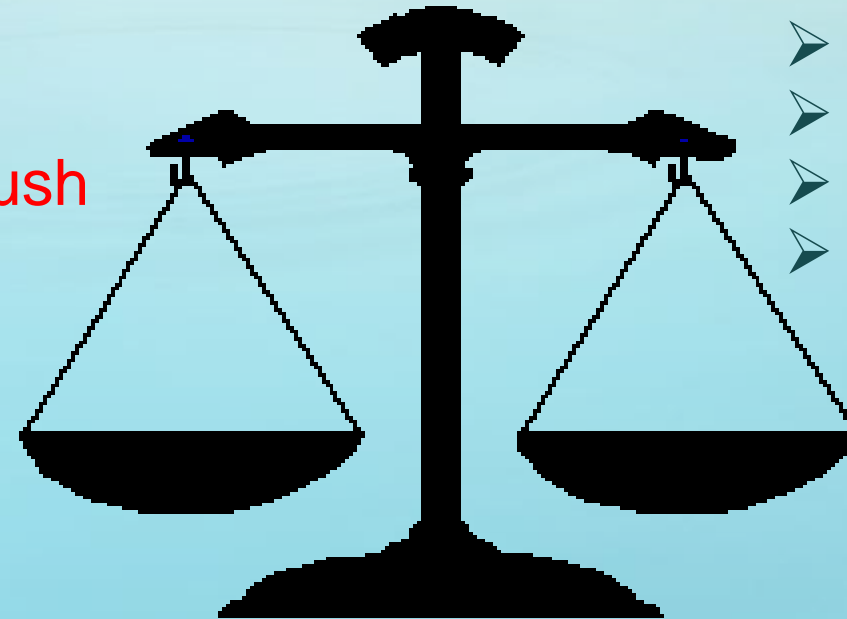
States of Being

Disequilibrium



- Stress
- Distress
- Adrenaline rush

Balancers



- Relaxation
- Rest
- Recovery
- Rejuvenation

Dealing with Distress

The Basics: Eating, Sleeping, Exercise

- Getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, and eating a healthy diet can help you manage stress and reduce anxiety

Breathe . . . Deeply

- Stressed-out people tend to take quick, shallow breaths, which further exacerbates the fight-or-flight response.
- Deep breathing slows down your physiological stress response

Focus on the Short-Term

- It is hard right now not to wonder how the pandemic will resolve, but thinking shorter-term has been found to be a more useful way to handle the stress

Dealing with Distress

Keep Up Key Connections

- Whatever communities are most important to you—whether your religious congregation, gym buddies, or book group—try to stay in touch.

Limit Your Intake of News

- Staying glued to the TV, watching press conferences is not helpful. limit the number of media options to those that you really need.
- Stick with trusted, science-backed sources like [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and news from the government and health department sites

Find a Way to Nature

- When out in nature, [even 20 minutes can measurably reduce levels of stress](#) hormones.

Dealing with Distress

Do Good to Feel Good

- People you reach out to can benefit you, too.

Keep a journal to document your thoughts:

- Writing down your feelings helps you to “brain-dump” your anxieties, frustrations and pains

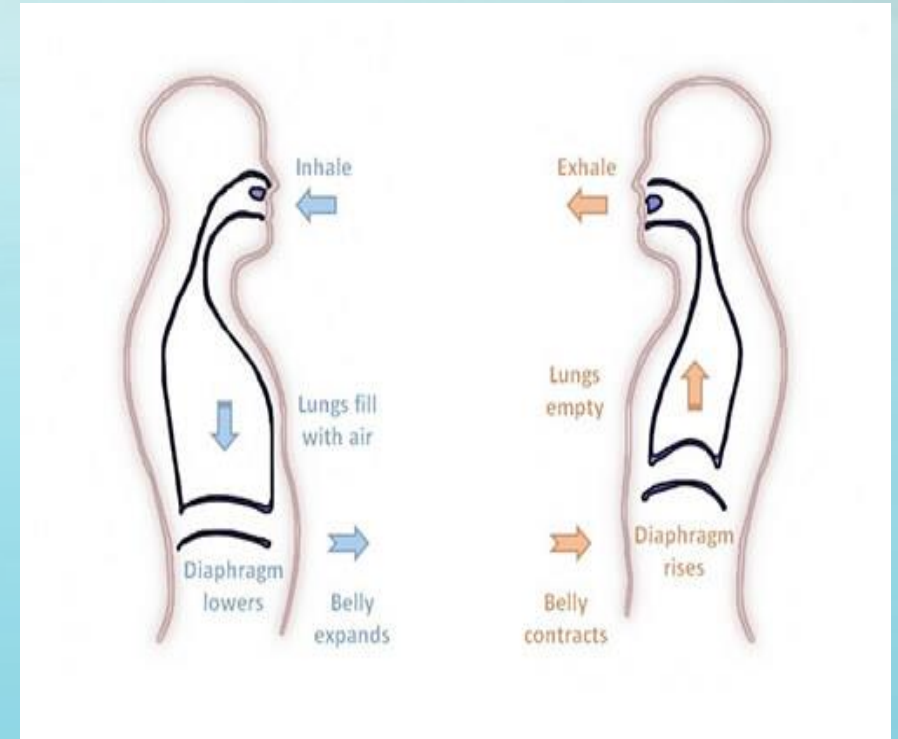
Know When to Get Expert Help:

- **Seek help right away if you have thoughts of harming yourself**
- **Reach out for help:**
 - If you realize that your thoughts, behaviors, or feelings are preventing you from feeling like you are functioning or able to get through a day
 - If you are having trouble getting out of bed
 - If you have lost interest in activities
 - If you feel really hopeless.

De-stressing Exercises

Deep breathing

- **At work** after a particularly stressful moment, stopping for a brief moment to take a few deep breaths can defuse the stress by lowering your blood pressure and reducing cortisone (stress hormone) level.
- Breathe in through your nose to a count of four, letting your belly rise as your lungs fill with air.
- Hold your breath for a count of four
- Exhale through your mouth to a count of four
- Repeat at least four times



De-stressing Exercises

At home

- Get comfortable. You can lie on your back in bed or on the floor with a pillow under your head and knees.
- Or you can sit in a chair with your shoulders, head, and neck supported against the back of the chair.
- Place one hand on your belly. Place the other hand on your chest.
 - Breathe in through your nose to a count of five, letting your belly rise as your lungs fill with air.
 - Hold your breath for a count of five
 - Exhale through your mouth to a count of five
 - Repeat at least five times
- As you breathe in, feel your belly rise. As you breathe out, feel your belly lower. The hand on your belly should move more than the one that is on your chest.
- Take four more full, deep breaths.
- Breathe fully into your lungs letting your belly rises and fall with each breath.



De-stressing Exercises

Relaxation with Imagery

- Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down. ...
- Start by just taking a few deep breaths to help you relax.
- Picture a setting that is calm and peaceful. ...
- Imagine your scene, and try to add some detail. ...
 - Think of a time and place in your life where and when you felt happiest
 - These sites can help de-stress

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Xdwr4cRTVA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inpok4MKVLM>

Recap

- The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a crisis in health care
- Crises cause stress
- Bad stress can cause negative physical, behavioral and emotional responses
- Negative responses can affect work place performance and relationships
- Advocacy for employer support is important
- It is imperative to be mindful about one's response to stress
- It is important to take actions to de-stress, including seeking professional assistance if needed.

Resources

- **VI Department of Health:** <https://doh.vi.gov/>
- **Family Resource Center, Inc. (St. Thomas)** [Call 340 776-3966](tel:3407763966). [National Hotline: 340-776-STOP \(7867\)](tel:3407767867)
- **Women's Coalition of St. Croix – Call 340.773.9272**
- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) – Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor in the U.S.
- [Crisis Text Line](#) – Text with a trained crisis counselor in the U.S., UK, Ireland, and Canada.
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) – If you're feeling suicidal, please call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) in the U.S. or visit [IASP](#) or [Suicide.org](https://suicide.org) for a helpline in your country.
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) – Isolated at home in an abusive situation and need help? In the U.S., call 1-800-799-7233 or find resources in your country [here](#).
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) – Up to date information and public health guidelines from the CDC. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) – Find country guidance, tips for protecting yourself, and travel advice. (World Health Organization)

THANK YOU

