

# TIP SHEET: KEEPING YOUR COMPOSURE IN THE FACE OF HARDSHIP

It's common to feel anxious in times of uncertainty. Your body's natural response to potential harm is to release large quantities of cortisol, epinephrine and norepinephrine to aid in alertness, muscle preparedness and energy. Given the scale of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and its impact both professionally and personally, you may be feeling these heightened physical and emotional responses more often.

Operating in this mode for an extended period of time, however, can result in high blood pressure, difficulty sleeping, digestion issues and poor decision-making. It's important to actively manage your stress levels in order to protect your entire wellbeing. A variety of strategies can help you respond to the body's "fight-or-flight" response with calm and composure.

In the midst of a stressful moment or situation, use these tips to slow down and remain poised:

- Stay passionate but don't allow your emotions to get in the way.
- Remind yourself not to take things personally.
- Keep a positive mental attitude.
- Remain courageous.
- Respond decisively.
- Take accountability.
- Be willing to listen and remain vulnerable.

Below are several ways to manage emotional health during prolonged uncertainty:

- Consider the impact of news and online information and limit exposure if needed.
- Keep to a consistent routine.
- Participate in exercise and/or stretching.
- Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing, meditation, yoga and/or mindfulness.
- Recognize when you may be catastrophizing (jumping to unreasonable conclusions) and redirect your thoughts to what you know to be true.
- Ground your thoughts into the present by focusing on what you can see, hear, smell and tactically feel.

Avoid unhealthy methods to manage stress, such as drugs, smoking and alcohol. These can diminish your body's immune system as well as limit your ability to cope emotionally. Support your physical and mental health by:

- Getting eight to nine hours of uninterrupted sleep at night.
  - Drinking at least two liters (64 oz.) of water a day.
  - Eating more vegetables, fruits, whole grains and lean proteins.
  - Minimizing foods high in fat and sugar.
-