



Topic
Maternity Staff Mental Health Care During COVID-19
Potential impact of COVID-19 in this topic area
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff may be working with a depleted team due to increased sickness absences and staff shielding• Staff are facing new challenges in relation to infection control and access to appropriate PPE• Staff are concerned about personal risks to health• Staff are anxious about ensuring they understand and remain up to date on clinical and infection control guidance• Staff may have high risk or isolating family members• Staff may be working increased hours• Staff may be working in unfamiliar areas or ways of practice• Staff may be unable to access their usual support mechanisms• Staff may be juggling additional caring commitments with work• Staff may be unable to attend work and be in self-isolation or shielding.
All or any of the above are likely to add to stress and anxiety at what is already a difficult time for all.
Current key guidance for this topic
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing• http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/statements/statement-physical-and-mental-health-key-to-resilience-during-covid-19-pandemic• https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8
References and links to online and virtual support and guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anxiety UK - Free to download Panic attack booklet: https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/products/anxiety-condition/panic-disorder/panic/ Helpline: 03444 775774 Email: support@anxietyuk.org.uk• Capacitar Practices to Transform Anxiety and Fear & Boost the Immune System - https://www.firstchurchberkeley.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid-19_Capacitar-Practices-English.pdf• Coronavirus and Your Wellbeing - https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing• Coronavirus: How to Protect Your Mental Health - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799• COVID-19: Our Mental Health - https://www.psy.ox.ac.uk/covid-19-info/covid-19-our-mental-health• Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Stress and Coping - https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-

anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html

- **Coronavirus (Technique for Reducing and Overcoming Fear)** - <https://www.heartmath.com/blog/health-and-wellness/special-care-focus-coronavirus-technique-for-reducing-and-overcoming-fear/>
 - Download a mindfulness app on your personal phone- with exercises designed to support mental health balance and aid with sleep [Balanceapp](#) is free or [Headspace](#) offers a free trial
 - **Exercise Indoors. Free online resources here – everything from HIIT to yoga:**
<https://makeyourbodywork.com/how-to-exercise-at-home/>
 - **Food and Nutrition Tips During Self-Quarantine** - <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-technical-guidance/food-and-nutrition-tips-during-self-quarantine>
 - **Looking After Your Mental Health During the Coronavirus Outbreak** - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>
 - **Managing mental health and COVID-19** - <https://www.matesinmind.org/news/covid19-mentalhealth.html>
 - **Meditation/Breathing:**
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/bedtime-meditation/>
<https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/mildmoderate/MindfulnessDownloads.asp>
- Headspace for NHS** www.headspace.com/nhs
- **Samaritans:** call 116 123 OR email jo@samaritans.org
 - **SANEline Online support forum** - http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/supportforum/
 - **Stay Physically Active During Self-Quarantine** - <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-technical-guidance/stay-physically-active-during-self-quarantine>
 - <https://ics.ac.uk/ICS/Education/Wellbeing/ICS/Wellbeing.aspx?hkey=92348f51-a875-4d87-8ae4-245707878a5c>
<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing/supporting-staff-wellbeing>

SUPPORT FOR NHS STAFF

Free short course with Prof Paul Gilbert OBE designed to alleviate staff suffering and risk of future trauma using Compassionate Mind Training. You can learn more about the course here:

<https://youtu.be/IFA8-JbniQc>

Many staff will be experiencing a range of powerful and painful emotions during this difficult time including anxiety, panic, anger and grief, and perhaps even guilt. This is entirely natural, but when these emotions persist for too long, they can and do take their toll on personal health, wellbeing and performance. Especially when combined with the strong perfectionist tendencies and critical inner voice which many committed health and care professionals possess.

This short course, developed by Dr Tim Anstiss and Professor Paul Gilbert, aims to help you better manage your mind, reduce your experience and the impact of powerful negative emotions, and help you experience increased feelings of being settled, calm and focussed. We hope it may help prepare you for shift, improve recovery after a shift, and perhaps reduce the amount of upset experienced during a shift.

It is a free, 4 session, skills development course. A new session will open every 3 days after you enrol. Each session contains a 10 min video, a one-page tip sheet and a 10 min audio recording to guide your practice. You decide how much practice you do – but we suggest at least one 10 min session each day. The course lasts 12 days and you will have access to all the content for many months.

To enrol on the course, simply click on this link <https://portal.academyforhealthcoaching.co.uk/enroll/product/prepare-your-mind/>

Add the course to your basket

Click "Place order"

On the Checkout page fill in your details

Please note down the username and password you give yourself. You will need this to log onto the course (we will send you an email with the login details you created, but you should write these down as they may not make it past the NHS firewall !!)

Complete the order

You will be automatically routed to your 'My Courses' page

Click on the course to access the content

A new session will be released for you every 3-Days - please log back in to continue the course.

Enjoy the course!



Looking after your mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19

May 2020



We know that the current pandemic is taking its toll on mental health and wellbeing. This also applies to those working in maternity services – in a recent survey more than half of you said that your mental health is worse. To help you remember you are not alone, we've pulled together some of the common stresses you may be experiencing – and some strategies to help you cope.



Stresses

Work and safety

- Uncertainty, fuelled by rapidly changing guidelines and new or unfamiliar ways of working
- Staff shortages, longer shifts and feeling more exhausted
- Worry about your own safety at work, especially if you're in a higher risk group
- Frustration at the availability of the right PPE and/or testing
- Anger at a lack of understanding by decision-makers about what you need

Professional practice

- Worry that you're not able to provide optimal care or practice according to professional ideals
- Fears for women and babies in your care
- Managing anxieties and fears of women and their partners
- Not always having the answers for women and their partners
- Concerns that PPE may be a barrier to building relationships with women and their partners

Family life

- Worry that you may transmit the virus to your family
- Fears of becoming ill and being unable to care for family, including children
- Financial worries if family members are furloughed or unable to work
- Ability to shop for essentials, like food and medication supplies
- Managing work and home life, especially home schooling
- Increased risk of domestic abuse



Strategies

Work and safety

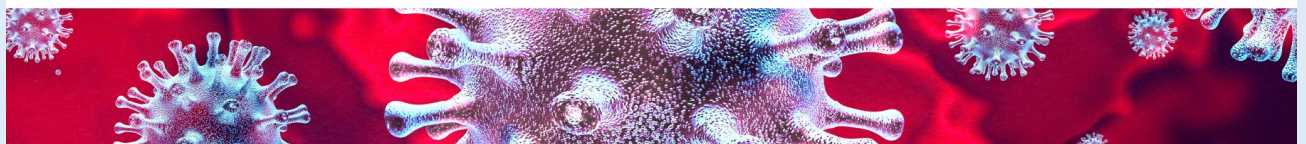
- Work closely with your local RCM health and safety reps on working conditions
- If you are at higher risk, ask your manager for a proper risk assessment
- Ensure you can take breaks for food, drink or just time away from the unit/ward
- Make sure you know what PPE you need for all aspects of your role and raise concerns if you can't access it

Wellbeing

- Look after your mental health, be self-aware and take time out when you can
- Don't be afraid to share your worries and ask for support from friends or family - and your RCM branch
- Make use of the psychological support and resources available, like NHS in Mind
- Be creative - think of new ways of providing care to women
- Try to keep some good routines with exercise and eating well

Managers can...

- Build trust through sensitive conversations so staff can explore their fears and concerns
- Listen to staff and communicate clearly, honestly and without judgment
- Provide the ongoing support of PMA and supervisory group meetings.
- Recognise the satisfaction staff get from providing quality care and look for opportunities to optimise these experiences



Available in A4: <https://www.rcm.org.uk/media/4094/looking-after-your-mental-health-wraparound-a3.pdf>

ADVICE FOR SUSTAINING **STAFF WELLBEING** IN CRITICAL CARE DURING AND BEYOND **COVID-19**



The anticipated needs of staff will vary across each of the phases, consider the following support mechanisms:

Phases	Issues and likely impact	Needs and recommended approach
Pre-phase: No cases on unit	Anticipatory anxiety about what's on its way. Inability to think clearly, feeling overwhelmed, planning. Communication errors. Tension in working relationships. "Readiness" burnout.	Increase a sense of control - the team are in a safe pair of hands. Reassurance and planning. Communication updates are key (you may be thinking ahead, they are thinking now). Escalation plan. Support to managers who are making plans and holding the stresses.
Initial phase: Case 1	Starting to get going, lots of trying out, lost time, repetition and frustration. Further anticipatory anxiety	War room - planning central to allow centralised communication. Management are visible and available. Regular communication bulletins and open forums.
Core Phase: Full scale -Multiple cases	Biggest risk period. Fear infection and implications for families. Overwhelming workload. Full go mode- adrenalin and automatic pilot. Exhaustion. Moral distress as healthcare rationed. Distress linked to personal or family experience of COVID-19. Experience fear or stigma when out in public.	Have runners in PPE areas. Promote peer support. It's okay to say you are not okay - Senior staff to model this. Rotate workers from high-stress to lower-stress functions. Small pre-brief and debrief the day. Partner inexperienced workers with their more experiences colleagues. Psychological first aid - drop in sessions for staff with employee wellbeing if you have it. Ensure the basics: Breaks, Facilities (food trolley in staff room), Sleep, Days off. Manage visitors
End Phase: Immediate aftermath	Exhaustion and post trauma recovery / stress	Debriefing. Staff 1-1 and group sessions. Learning and preparation for the future. Organise thanks and reward. Look out for signs of PTSD in staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on edge and hyper arousal, poor sleep • flashbacks or re-experiencing • avoidance of reminders.
Long term	Some ongoing PTSD Reflection and learning	(Continued from previous row)

SELF-CARE DURING COVID-19



Most importantly this is unprecedented: It is okay to not be okay

- Seek information updates at specific times during the day once or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports can cause anyone to feel worried. Get the facts. www.gov.uk
- Feeling stressed is an experience that you and many of your colleagues are likely going through. It is normal to be feeling this way in the current situation. Stress and the feelings associated with it are by no means a reflection that you cannot do your job or that you are weak.
- Managing your stress/psychosocial wellbeing during this time is as important as managing your physical health.
- Take care of your basic needs and ensure rest and respite during work or between shifts, eat sufficient and healthy food, engage in physical activity, and stay in contact with family and friends.
- This is an unprecedented scenario, don't try to learn new strategies, use the ones that you have used in the past to manage times of stress.
- This is likely to be a marathon - pace yourself
- Consider your psychological energy levels - you will need to "fill up" after "emptying the tank"
- Be aware of your "bandwidth"- it might take longer to think things through and make sense of things if you are feeling overwhelmed
- Beware dramatic language that might panic your colleagues.
- Avoid using unhelpful coping strategies such as tobacco, alcohol or other drugs.
- Some workers may unfortunately experience avoidance by their family or community due to stigma or fear. If possible, staying connected with your loved ones including through digital methods is one way to maintain contact. Turn to your colleagues or team leader for social support - your colleagues may be having similar experiences to you.

STOP, BREATHE, then THINK- slowing your breathing slows the stress cycle and re-engages your frontal lobes - then you can think.