



Team:

May is **Mental Health Awareness Month**. It is always a good time to talk about the importance of mental health in general. But, it is especially helpful to talk about it in a time of prolonged stress and uncertainty.

With all that is going on these days, it is understandable to feel anxious and, at times, overwhelmed. You are not alone. Millions of people are facing the same worries and challenges. Fear is not a weakness.

That's why social connections are now more important than ever. Physical distancing stops the virus. But in the midst of this emergency, we need to stay connected with family, friends, and coworkers.

Please take care of yourself, both physically and psychologically.

Physical and mental health are two sides of the same coin. As much as possible, hold onto your normal routine. Look for ways to connect at work via technology - planned coffee breaks together, for example. And please check in on people you know and love. Let them know that you are available for them, especially if they might be struggling.

Recognize opportunities to learn. In the new normal, we have the potential to become even better professionals than we are now. We are living with feelings of lost control, loss of connection with people we love, physical stress, and psychological anxiety. We are entering a world in which some of the citizens we serve deal with every day. This presents the opportunity to be more humble, compassionate, and empathetic.

The psychiatrist Victor Frankl, author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, an autobiographical account of his time in Nazi concentration camps and how he survived, wrote, "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." He also said this:

"Everything can be taken from a person but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

Remember that the State's free Employee Assistance Program is available to you for mental health counseling. It also includes help with financial and legal affairs. Also, remember there is a national Disaster Distress Helpline staffed with mental health professionals 24 hours a day.

We're in this together. I believe we will come out different from the way we were, but stronger than ever. MISSOURI STRONG.

Mark Stringer

Director

Missouri Department of Mental Health

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