

## Maintaining Wellbeing During COVID-19 and Beyond

### 1. Rethinking your emotions during times of stress.

- ❖ Emotions can cause us to feel impulsive and out of control but they are NOT a sign of weakness.
- ❖ Emotions provide information about how we're doing.
- ❖ It can be helpful to label emotions as "uncomfortable and comfortable" rather than as "good or bad".
- ❖ Be aware of surface emotions and the secondary emotions that may lie beneath (e.g. we may feel angry but beneath the anger we're feeling disappointed that another task prevented us spending time with a loved one)
- ❖ Learn to simply acknowledge and accept how you're feeling rather than judging whether you "should" feel that way or not.
- ❖ Emotions are temporary and typically come in waves.

### 2. Your body's reaction to stress.

- ❖ Brain function decreases under stress (as high as 50-75%).
- ❖ Lack of control leads to a fight, flight, or freeze response.
- ❖ Stress takes its toll on our bodies. It wears us out.
- ❖ Stress hormone (cortisol) increases heart rate & blood pressure.
- ❖ Decreased concentration and memory.
- ❖ Sleep can increase or decrease.
- ❖ Immune system can be compromised.

**\*Burnout** is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands. As the stress continues, you begin to lose the interest and motivation that led you to take on a certain role in the first place. This can lead to feeling like a failure, or useless.

### 3. Ways of maintaining mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health.

- ❖ The opposite of burnout is engagement. Rather than focusing on all the things you're struggling to do, focus on the things that energize you.
- ❖ Be aware of the things you can, and can't control.
- ❖ Rethink your routine (i.e. regular healthy meals, moderate exercise, sleep hygiene, "fake commute", regular breaks). Is your routine working for you and your family?
- ❖ Stay connected with people who energize you.
- ❖ Encourage talks with family members about how everyone's doing.

- ❖ Prioritize tasks as (e.g. “need to do now”, “need to do later”, “want to do”, “get to do”).
- ❖ Make to-do lists to calm your mind (i.e. decrease mental load).
- ❖ Set limits and guidelines for your workday (e.g. no email after a certain time)
- ❖ Rest well. Know which activities feed you and which activities drain you and find a balance.
- ❖ Have fun.
- ❖ Go outside.
- ❖ Be creative (e.g. art, humour, cooking, games, small renovations, rearrange your workspace).
- ❖ Feed your mind and your soul (spiritual disciplines)
- ❖ Limit news, social media and screen time.
- ❖ Practice gratitude.
- ❖ Help others (i.e. donate to food banks, visit people, reach out, be kind).
- ❖ Know your values and act accordingly (e.g. family time to create strong bonds, faith, exercise, etc.).
- ❖ Tune in to your body’s signals.
- ❖ Breathe deeply and slowly sometimes.
- ❖ Self-Soothing: Try muscle relaxation, different types of prayer, mindfulness.
- ❖ 5 Senses Grounding: 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, 1 thing you can taste.
- ❖ Be kind to yourself (Self-Compassion)

#### 4. Red Flags: Signs that it’s time to reach out for help.

- ❖ Prolonged, unrelenting stress, sadness, loneliness, hopelessness, depression, anxiety and other uncomfortable emotions that are impacting your quality of life.
- ❖ Persistent, ruminating, hopeless thoughts.
- ❖ Everyday tasks feel overwhelming.
- ❖ Loss of interest in things you usually enjoy.
- ❖ Unexplained physical symptoms (i.e. stomach issues, headaches, body aches, blood pressure).
- ❖ Feeling “not yourself”.
- ❖ Lashing out at loved ones (increased conflict).
- ❖ Others express their concern for us.
- ❖ Increased reliance on substances to function or to aid sleep (alcohol, prescription and non-prescription drugs).
- ❖ If you were struggling prior to COVID-19.

