

Monitoring your Mental Wellbeing

A Guide for Frontline and Emergency Workers

Working on the frontline or in emergency roles often means exposure to intense, unpredictable, and distressing situations, and often on a regular basis. Monitoring your mental wellbeing is an important part of staying safe, effective, and healthy - both on and off the job.

Stress responses can build gradually and may not always be obvious. Noticing early changes allows you to take action before stress or trauma becomes overwhelming.

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR

Emotional

- Feeling constantly on edge, irritable, or emotionally numb
- Heightened anxiety, sadness, or anger
- Loss of motivation or compassion fatigue

Physical

- Ongoing fatigue or exhaustion
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Headaches, muscle tension, or frequent illness

Cognitive

- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Intrusive thoughts or replaying incidents
- Forgetfulness or confusion

Behavioural

- Withdrawal from colleagues, friends, or family
- Increased use of alcohol, caffeine, or substances
- Changes in eating habits or routines

Daily check-in: Self Reflection is key - Ask yourself:

- How am I feeling physically and emotionally today?
- What has been hardest recently?
- Am I sleeping and recovering between shifts?
- Who have I spoken to about how I'm really going?

Even brief self-reflection can help identify when support is needed.

PROTECTIVE STRATEGIES

- **Use regular breaks** and rotate away from high-intensity tasks when possible
- **Stay connected** with trusted colleagues and supports
- **Limit repeated exposure** to distressing material when off duty
- **Engage in recovery activities** that help you decompress after shifts
- **Maintain routines** around sleep, nutrition, and movement

AFTER CRITICAL INCIDENTS

- Attend **debriefs or peer check-ins** if offered
- Notice delayed reactions (responses can emerge days or weeks later)
- Allow yourself time and space to process the experience
- Seek support early rather than waiting until you feel overwhelmed

WHEN TO REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT

Consider professional support if:

- Symptoms persist or intensify
- You feel emotionally detached or constantly alert
- Work or relationships are being affected
- You're concerned about your safety or wellbeing



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