

To: All staff and physicians
From: Maura McKinnon, Chief Human Resource Officer
Date: Jan. 15, 2021
Re: **Mental Health Supports**

The increasing number of COVID-19 positive cases across New Brunswick and Orange level status may be weighing heavily on your minds.

While anxiety is a normal reaction to the pandemic as people worry about their health, and the health of their loved ones, too much anxiety can start to cause harm at home and at work.

Feeling stressed and fearful every day takes a toll on our health and well-being very quickly. Anxiety can be problematic when it becomes persistent or impairs day-to-day tasks, rational decision-making, and / or maintaining healthy relationships.

Understanding anxiety and its impacts

Emotionally you feel:

- Fearful
- Depressed
- Guilt
- Anger
- Heroic, euphoric, or invulnerable
- Apathetic

At work, you may:

- Have trouble remembering things
- Feel confused
- Have trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Have difficulty making decisions

Overall, anxiety may cause you to experience:

- An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- An increase in irritability
- Difficulty relaxing or sleeping
- Resentment toward others
- Difficulty communicating and/or listening
- An inability to find humour or have fun

Here are some tips to help you cope with anxiety and help you minimize or ease stress and tension during this difficult time:

1. **Limiting exposure to news and social media.** When staying informed, stick to trusted, verified news sources such as HorizonNB.ca, GNB.ca/coronavirus, and Canada.ca/coronavirus
2. **Take care of your body.** Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep.
3. **Identify what is within your control.** Try to direct your energy towards what most worries you within your own control.
4. **Inform yourself and take precautions.** Once you've determined what the recommended precautions are, incorporate them into your regular routine. Right now, the recommendations are: wear a mask, wash your hands regularly with soap and water; stay home if you feel sick; avoid those who are sick; practice the two-metre physical distancing guidelines.
5. **Stay connected in new ways.** Having a support network of people to talk to when you're feeling anxious can help to keep you grounded and remind you to keep the perspective you need. Use social media, telephone, texts, and email.
6. **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy and that were part of your regular routine, as appropriate.

There are several tools that may help you and your family navigate through these turbulent times.

The [Canadian Mental Health Association New Brunswick](http://CanadianMentalHealthAssociationNewBrunswick) contains multiple resources for mental well being including information about pandemic-related anxiety, and tools such as webinars, tips, and workshops.

Horizon's [Employee Health and Wellness page](#) on Skyline also contains many supportive resources, including information about Horizon's Employee and Family Assistance Program provider [Homewood Health](#), which is a leader in mental health resources for employers and employees.

Homewood Health has a dedicated [COVID-19 section](#) where you will find:

- Articles on how to maintain some sense of normalcy during the pandemic
- Practical tips and programs on anxiety and depression
- And more!

In addition to Homewood Health, the Government of Canada introduced a free program for all Canadians in March 2020:

- A toll-free 24/7 crisis hotline is available at 1-844-751-2133. Individuals will receive crisis counselling support and/or referral to community resources.
- A global mental health support program called [Wellness Together Canada](#). It consists of free online resources, tools, apps, as well as connections to trained volunteers and qualified mental health professionals.