



Effective Communication for Leaders and Organizations through COVID-19

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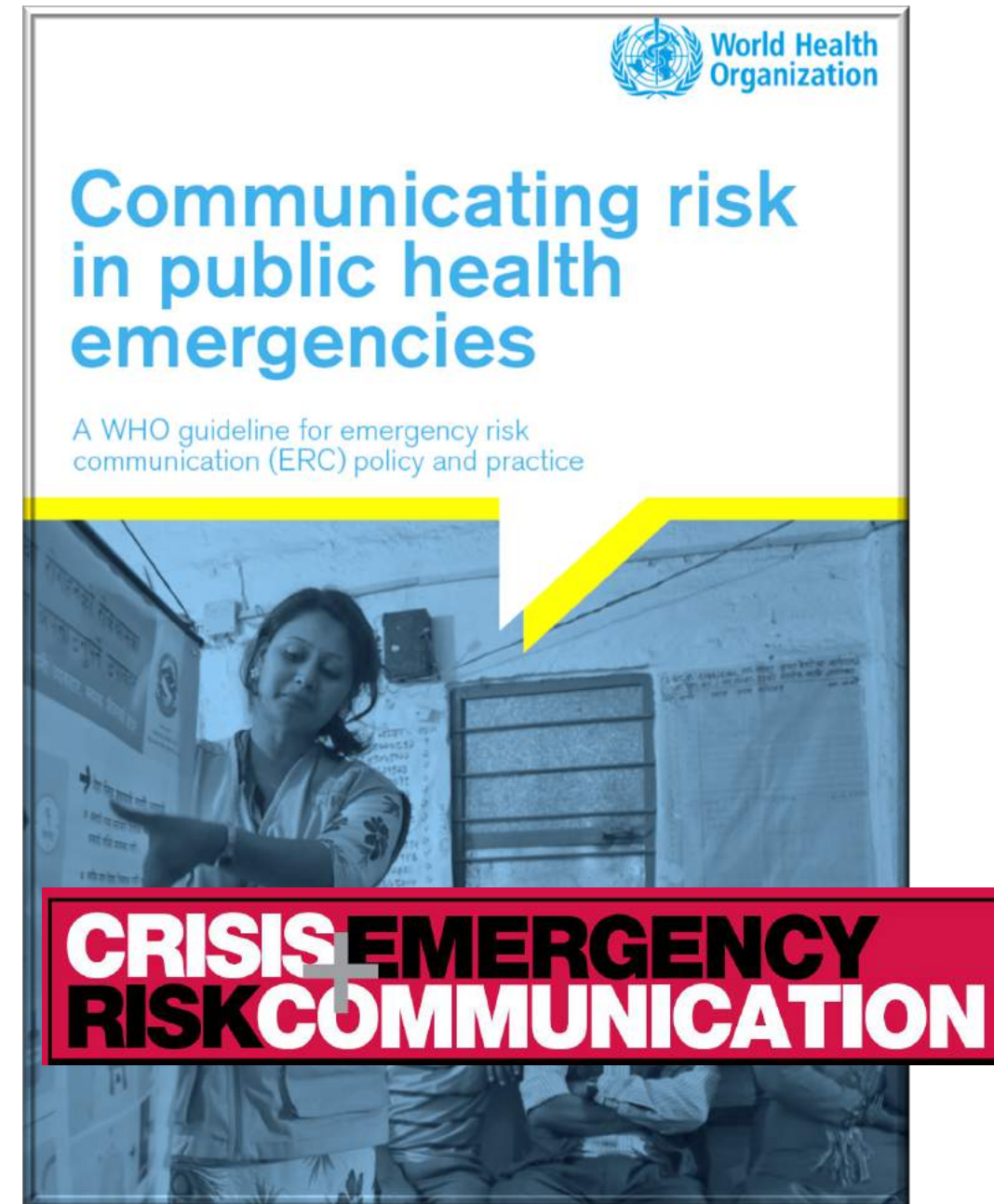
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Overview

- Examples from recent research: employee perspectives on communication from employers during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Risk communication guidance (CDC and WHO frameworks)
- Considerations for leaders and employers
 - barriers to working/returning to work during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - factors that may interfere with compliance with public health advice, including guidance from leaders and employers

Goal: begin to design communication strategies that support employees during this crisis

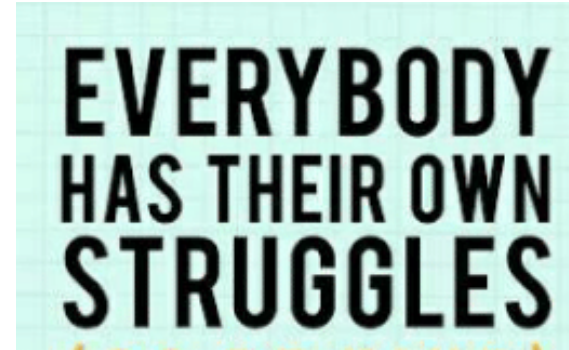


A word about this heterogeneous audience

- Health Links network (HR professionals, health and safety personnel, leadership members in organizations throughout Colorado, including many small businesses)
- Public Health/Anschutz Medical Campus professionals
- (other) Team leaders/supervisors
- (other) Employees

-----Working from home; those beginning to return to work; essential workers, still working, but potentially at personal risk; healthcare workers and more

- Those who have lost a job and are experiencing financial strain
- Those who are worried about job loss
- Those caring for others (children, older parents, those with special needs)
- Those considered in high risk groups for COVID-19 (older, medically fragile, others)
- Those who have lost a loved one to COVID-19
- Those struggling with personal health concerns
- Many others



We are not all in the same boat.



We are all in the same storm.



APRIL 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

A Business Leader's
Guide to Effective
Crisis Communications



BROUGHT TO YOU BY



CONTENT BY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Companies and brands in Colorado and across North America face unprecedented leadership and communications challenges due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic and resulting economic and financial market disruptions.

Guide: “A Business Leader’s Guide to Effective Crisis Communications”-
Eight COVID-19 Best Practices [here](#).

From the Guide: Uncertain times elevate the importance of clear, credible communication from leaders. Organizations most likely to survive and emerge with reputations intact will be those that:

- Communicate proactively at every stage of the crisis while constantly looking ahead
- Balance reassurance and realism
- Anticipate stakeholder concerns and address them clearly and forthrightly
- Put calm, authentic leaders forward

Colorado Chamber has partnered with [Linhardt PR](#) to provide a free [white paper on effective crisis communications](#) for the business community.

Research Report: Leadership Communications During COVID-19



orangefier

LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS DURING COVID-19

A survey of US organizations

APRIL 3, 2020

– “

*Just be open and transparent with employees.
These are scary times.*

Leaders have risen to the challenge of communicating with employees during the pandemic.

However, leaders were more likely than employees to rate communications as effective across domains.

Less than half of employees said they believe their organization is *extremely* or *very interested* in hearing **employee feedback** during this pandemic.

In future communications, respondents want –

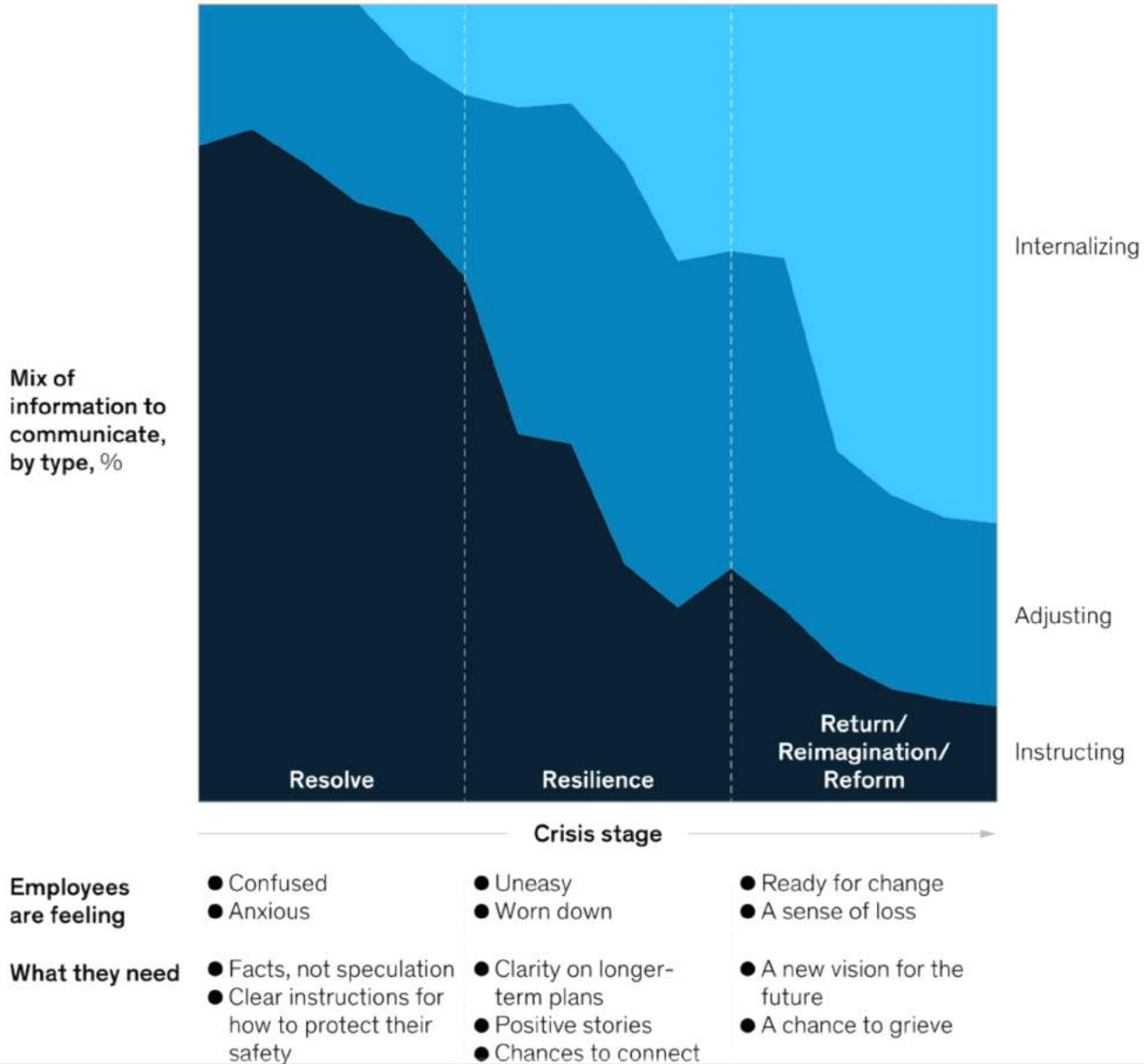
- **more transparency** about what the organization knows and doesn't know,
- more **resources for emotional and mental health**, including dealing with stress and anxiety, and
- stronger **acknowledgement of the difficulty of the situation.**

In addition, they wanted

- to understand clear plans for the organization's future
- the impact of the disruption on their role, work and job security
- more consistent, frequent and direct communications from top leaders
- more direct acknowledgement of misinformation and/or rumors
- More information about sick days, personal days and other benefits to deal with sick family members, children at home, etc.

“Being transparent, being as clear as possible, staying calm and showing empathy are critical. These steps, along with demonstrating openness to feedback and clarifying what the future looks like, are top priorities for building greater employee satisfaction and trust.”

Crisis communication life cycle, illustrative



Crisis life cycle, needs vary with the cycle's stages.

- 1-Early stages, **instructive** information to encourage calm; how to stay safe is fundamental.
- 2-As people begin to follow safety instructions, shift to a focus on **adjusting** to change & uncertainty.
- 3-Finally, as the end comes into view, ramp up information to help people make sense of the crisis and its impact (**internalizing**).

[Based on Crisis Stage Models, reviewed here](#)

[See McKinsey & Company](#) for crisis communication life cycle

7 Things to Consider When Communicating About Health



www.cdc.gov/phpr



Public health communication guidelines during crises

- CDC: Crisis Emergency Risk Communications (CERC)
- World Health Organization: Risk Communication in Health Emergencies

How do people process information during a crisis?



By understanding how people take in information during a crisis state, we can better plan to communicate with them. During a crisis:

We simplify messages.⁴

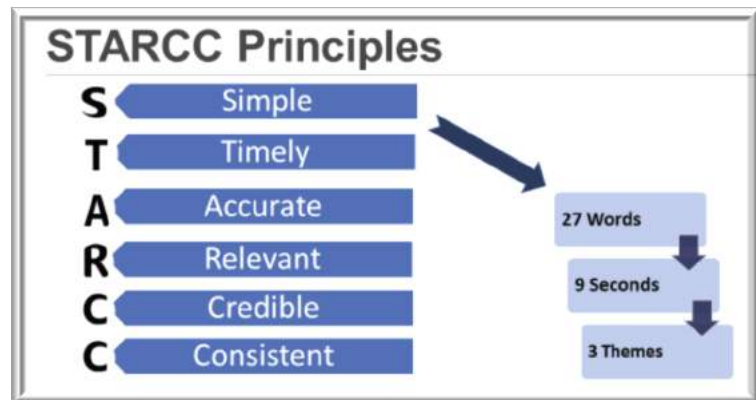
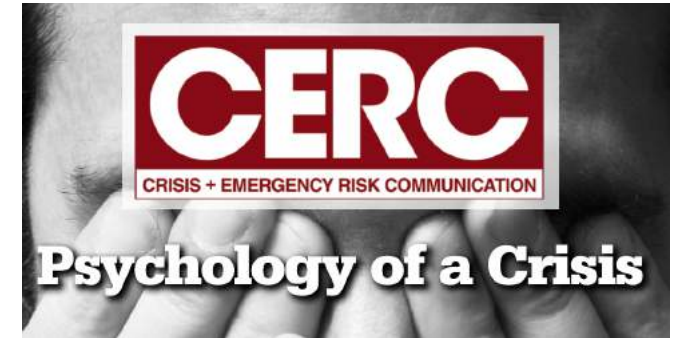
Under intense stress and possible information overload, we tend to miss the nuances of health and safety messages by doing the following:

- Not fully hearing information because of our inability to juggle multiple facts during a crisis.
- Not remembering as much of the information as we normally could.

- Misinterpreting confusing action messages.

To cope, many of us may not attempt a logical and reasoned approach to decision making. Instead, we may rely on habits and long-held practices. We might follow bad examples set by others.

Use simple messages.





CDC: Crisis Emergency Risk Communications (CERC)

Build Trust and Credibility by Expressing:

- Empathy and caring.
- Competence and expertise.
- Honesty and openness.
- Commitment and dedication.

Top Tips:

- Consistent messages are vital.
- Don't over-reassure.
- Acknowledge uncertainty.
- Express wishes. ("I wish I had answers.")
- Explain the process in place to find answers.
- Acknowledge people's fear.
- Give people things to do.
- Ask more of people (share risk).

As a Spokesperson:

- Know your organization's policies.
- Stay within the scope of responsibilities.
- Tell the truth. Be transparent.
- Embody your agency's identity.

Be First. Be Right. Be Credible.



Give people clear instructions about actions that are easy to perform, especially when introducing threatening information (such as health risks). Threatening communication: a critical re-analysis and a revised meta-analytic test of fear appeal theory

Trust and credibility of the message (messenger)

Key elements to building trust:

- Empathy and caring
- Competence and expertise
- Honesty
- Commitment
- Accountability

Communicate...

What is
known

What is not
known

What you are doing to
find out what is not known

People seem to be able to tolerate you being wrong if you're honest about why you were wrong and what you were wrong about and what you're doing to correct it. But if you are ever perceived as being a dishonest broker of information, I think it's just about impossible to recover from it."

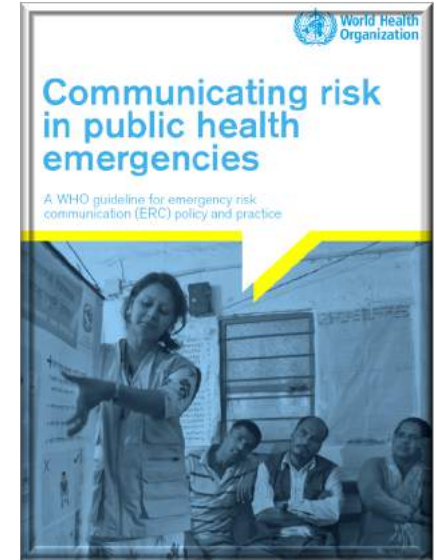
-Julie Gerberding,
M.D., Director, CDC, SARS, 2003

There were a lot of times during SARS where we were trying to balance you know being first, being credible and being right. And we at CDC made the conscious decision that our credibility was the most important thing. And so that honesty of 'we don't know, we're sorry we don't know, we feel terrible we don't know and that we're all in this predicament,' it's a much better message than trying to pretend that you know something when you don't or try to reassure people when there really is no foundation for the reassurance.

-Julie Gerberding,
M.D., Director, CDC, SARS, 2003

**CRISIS + EMERGENCY
RISK COMMUNICATION**
by Leaders for Leaders

Building trust and engaging with affected populations



A.3.: Community engagement

Recommendation

Identify people that the community trusts and build relationships with them. Involve them in decision-making to ensure interventions are collaborative, contextually appropriate and that communication is community-owned.

Strong recommendation

Moderate quality evidence

What we are learning from our research with domestic violence (intimate partner abuse) public service messaging campaigns among refugee groups



لما ولادكن يرسموا، أي صورة لح يرسموا؟
"البقاع" مع الأسرة الآمنة ...

Community designed messaging campaigns can be a powerful way to change attitudes and behaviors. This capitalizes on **social norms-based** approaches to behavioral change (messages from “in-group” members = more credible).

أطلب
الخط الأمن (٢٤/٢٤): ٨١٧٨٨١٧٨
مركز الرجال: ٧١٢٨٣٨٢٠
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The Lancet & CUGH Global Health Webinar Series

MAY 5 - Webinar recording [here](#).

Mental Health & COVID-19 Best Practice Public Health Information Campaigns: What Is Working and Why?

Main points, global perspectives –

- Lots of **misinformation** and as a result, there are **credibility concerns** associated with specific sources of information
- Messaging must be **tailored to the needs of the specific population** (including at risk or otherwise vulnerable sub-groups)
- **Mental health and psychosocial support is a critical component** that should be incorporated in messaging campaigns/communications
- **How to reach groups that may be less accessible** (e.g., not online, limited access to technology)

The Childcare Barriers to Putting America Back to Work

Posted on April 22, 2020 by Jonathan Dingel, Christina Patterson and Joseph Vavra



Substantial fractions of the US labor force have children at home and will likely face obstacles in returning to work if childcare options remain closed. Under a policy where young workers return to work while schools remain closed, 35 million workers who are over 55 would not be able to return to work, and another 16 million who are under 55 would be constrained by childcare obligations.



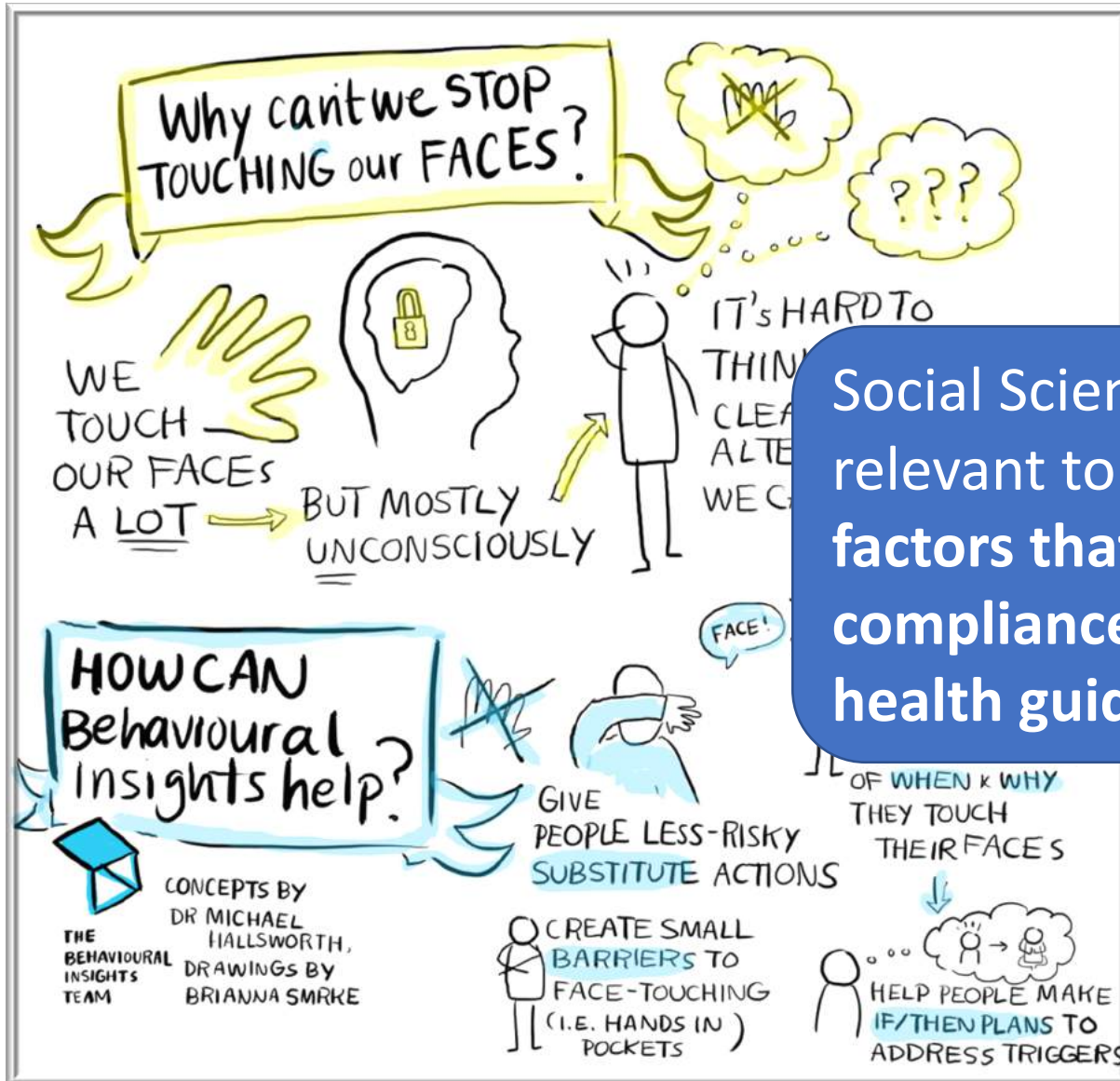
Consider barriers to return to work that may be unique to your (diverse) employees.

- High risk groups
- Caring for others at home (children, others)



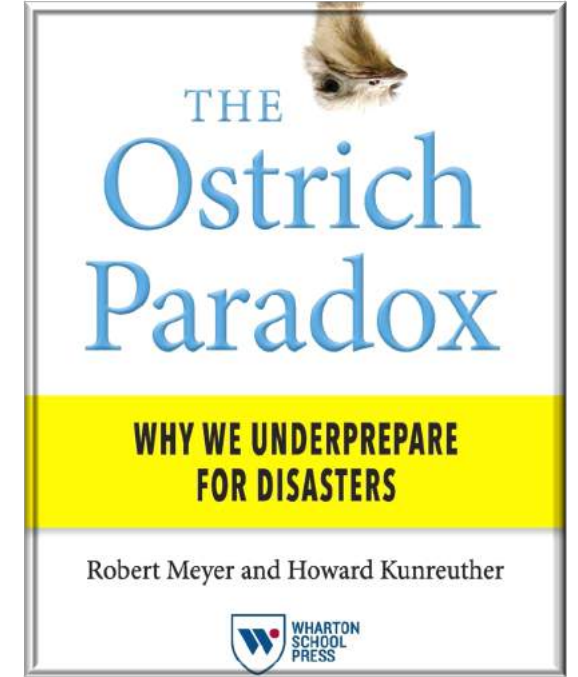
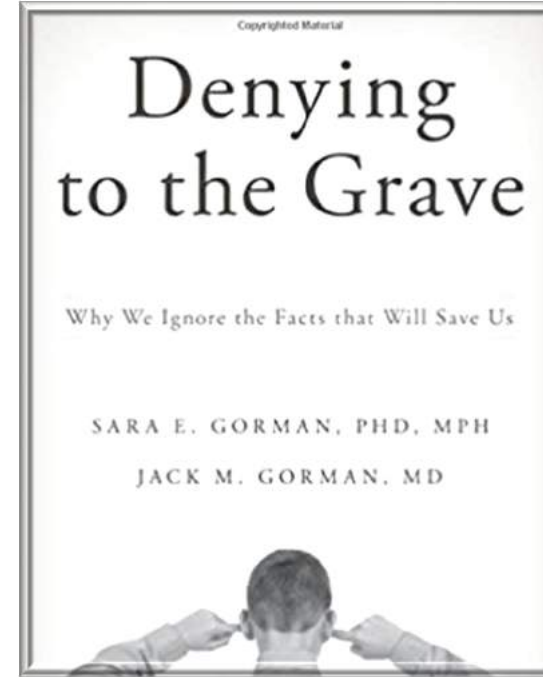
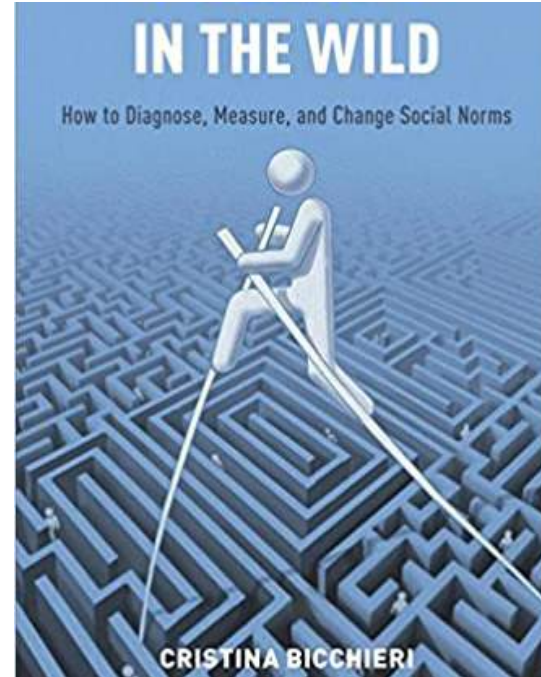
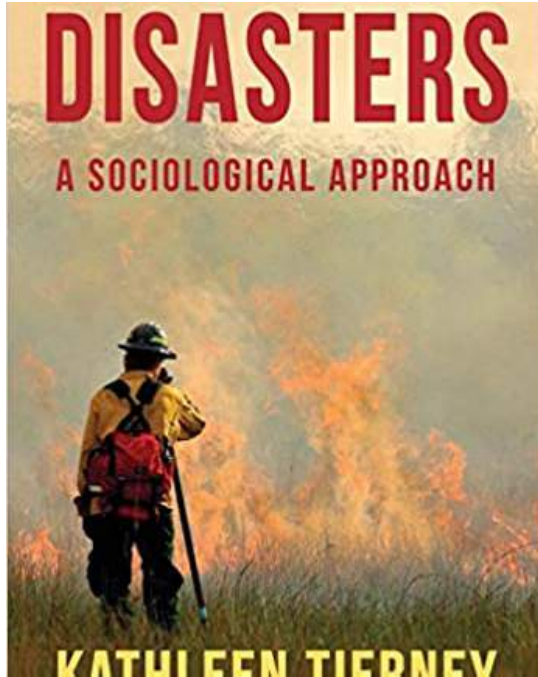
[PODCAST: Challenges in Returning Employees Back to Work After COVID-19](#)

Public health guidance (or guidance from an employer)



Social Science research relevant to understanding factors that can influence compliance with public health guidance





Recommended books

- Risk perception
- Social Norms
- Cognitive bias

Why do some reject accepted health guidance?



Engage social group

- **Charismatic leader**
- **Confirmation** bias and the internet
- Nature of **risk perception**
- **Myopia** – focus on the short-term
- **Optimism** – underestimate negative outcomes
- **Inertia** – maintain the status quo, especially in the face of uncertainty about benefits of protective measures
- **Simplification** – tendency to selectively attend to only a subset of the relevant facts.
- **Herding** (social norms) – tendency to base choices on the observed or perceived actions of others

Anecdotal Bias: people are more likely to base decisions on anecdotal information (e.g., personal stories) instead of facts, especially when anxious.

Courtesy: Dr. Courtney Welton-Mitchell, Colorado School of Public Health © 2020

COVID-19 misinformation claiming to be from Johns Hopkins circulates widely online

Message billed as 'excellent summary' of coronavirus information has no identifiable connection to Johns Hopkins, has been labeled 'misattributed' by Snopes

Experts suggest that when evaluating information you find online, confirm that it comes from a trusted source such as the CDC or WHO before sharing it.

During COVID-19 Pandemic It Isn't Just Fake News But Seriously Bad Misinformation That Is Spreading On Social Media



Peter Suci Contributor
Social Media

Forbes



Coronavirus lies and virus facts lying as a dishonest liar doctor spreading false medical ... [+] GETTY

Confusion about changing messages may make people more susceptible to misinformation.

For Black Men, Fear That Masks Will Invite Racial Profiling

African-American men worry that following the C.D.C. recommendation to cover their faces in public could expose them to harassment from the police.



As the coronavirus spreads, black men face two concerns: the virus and those who see their covered faces as threatening. Brittainy Newman/The New York Times

Other barriers to compliance with public health messaging that need to be to considered:

Racism, stigma, xenophobia...



Courtesy: Dr. Courtney Welton-Mitchell, Colorado School of Public Health © 2020

Employees want resources for emotional and mental health, including for dealing with stress and anxiety



Mental Health and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Many people are experiencing mental health difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Feelings of grief, fear and anxiety are common, along with sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating and more.

[COVID-19's Psychological Toll: Mental Distress Among Americans Has Tripled During the Pandemic Compared to 2018](#)

[The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use](#)
(Panchal et al, April 21, 2020)

[Factors Associated With Mental Health Outcomes Among Health Care Workers Exposed to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) (Lai et al., 2020)

[Immediate Psychological Responses and Associated Factors during the Initial Stage of the 2019 Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Epidemic among the General Population in China](#) (Wang et al., 2020)



Courtesy: Dr. Courtney Welton-Mitchell, Colorado School of Public Health © 2020

Detrimental effects of chronic stress

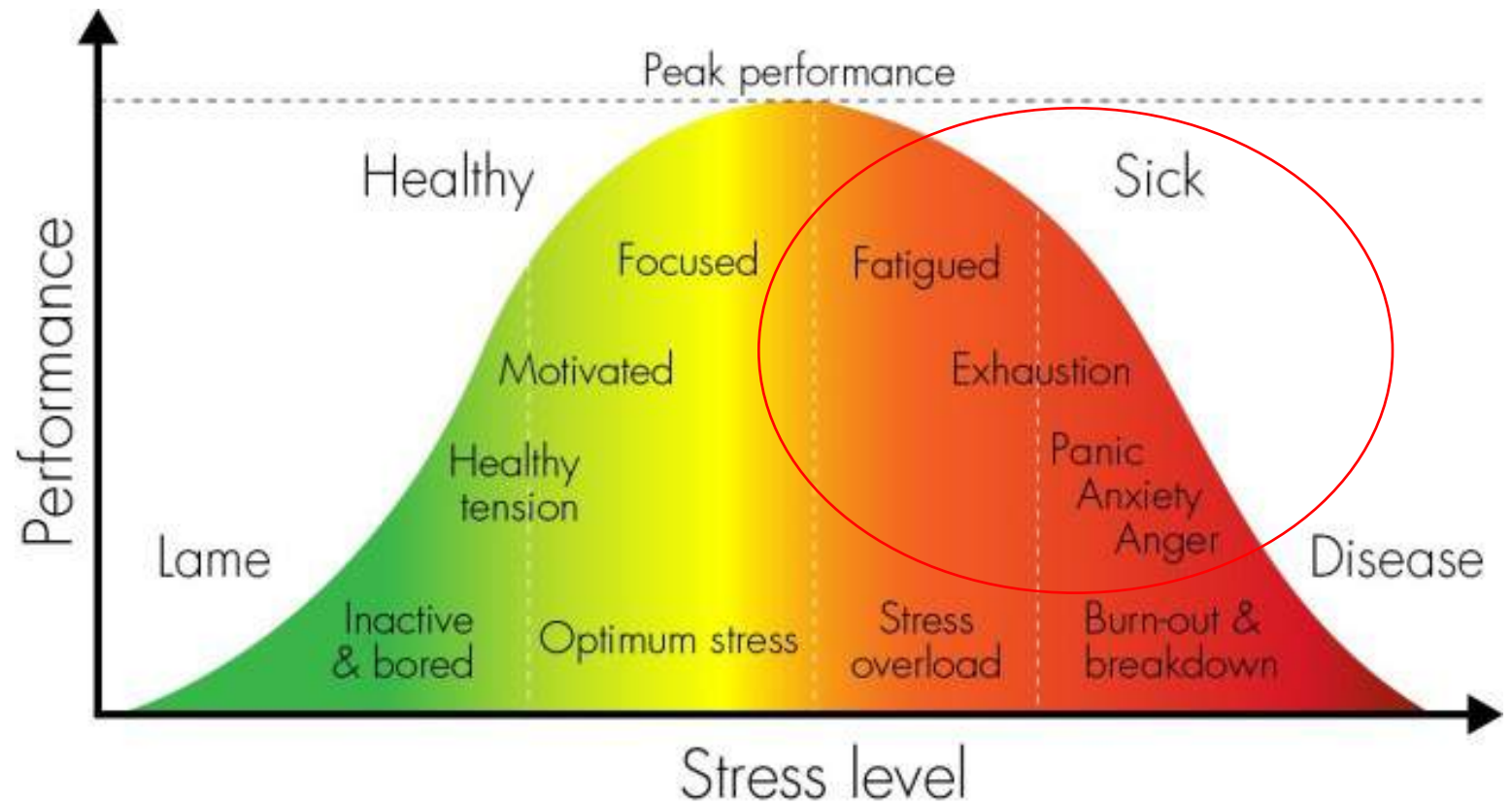
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ***STRESS***

BEHAVIOR SIGNS

- ✓ Worrying about things you didn't worry about before
- ✓ Loss of interest in things you used to enjoy (hobbies)
- ✓ Wanting to withdraw from people and activities
- ✓ Poor concentration, confusion; forgetfulness
- ✓ Uncertainty or trouble making decisions
- ✓ Relationship problems
- ✓ Sad mood
- ✓ Feeling anxious
- ✓ Change in personality, irritability
- ✓ Negative thinking
- ✓ Increased smoking/drinking

PHYSICAL SIGNS

- ✓ Weight loss or gain, changes in appetite
- ✓ Stomach or gastrointestinal problems
- ✓ Poor or disturbed sleep
- ✓ Clenching or grinding teeth
- ✓ Chest pain
- ✓ Poor hygiene



Stress can impact job performance

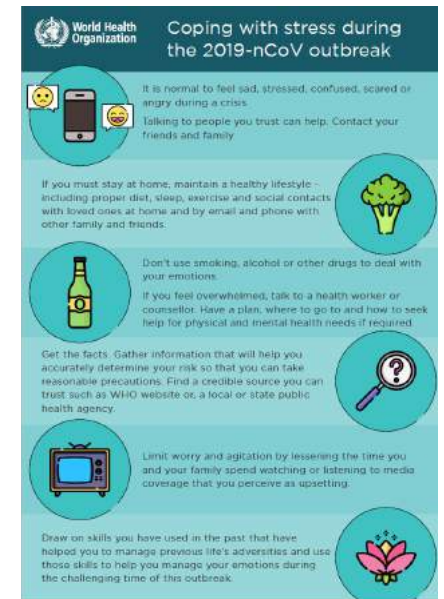
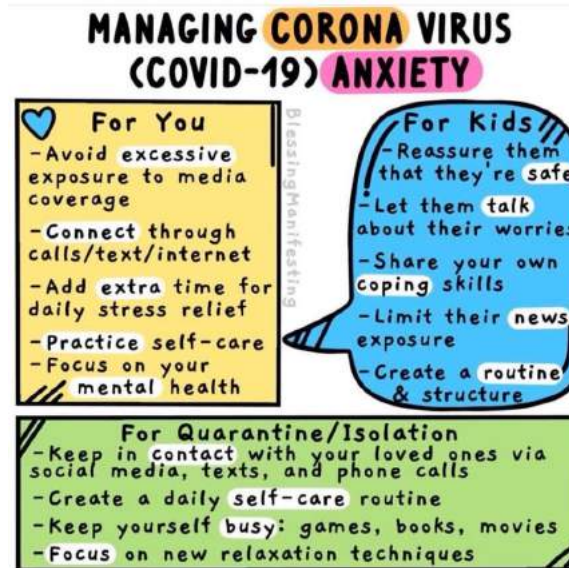
COVID-19 Webinar: Practical Strategies for Supporting Mental Health During COVID-19

Courtney Welton-Mitchell, PhD

Includes resources for individuals at the local and nationwide level, including self-help, hotlines and telemental health.



University of Colorado **Boulder**



For Leaders: [COVID-19 Talking Points, Briefing Cards, Briefing Templates, Graphics, Videos and more to tailor](#)

[Information for Leaders](#) (CAC-enabled milSuite page)

Information for leaders is available on APHC's CAC-enabled milSuite page and includes talking points, briefing cards, and briefing templates that Leaders can use to tailor COVID-19 information for their populations.

Army Information:

Communication Toolkit	Face Coverings - Community Settings
Facemasks - Clinical Settings	Facilities
Frequently Asked Questions	Guidance & Alerts
Healthcare Professionals	Manage Anxiety & Stress
Pets	Pregnancy & Breastfeeding
Understanding Health Protection Condition (HPCON) Levels	Support a Healthy Immune System with Proper Sleep, Activity, & Nutrition (P3).

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Protect Yourself and Your Family

- Practice social distancing by putting space between yourself and others
- Ensure you have enough food, medication, and other items to last at least 14 days—don't forget to gather supplies for babies and pets as well
- Do not travel to areas experiencing active disease transmission
- Observe local guidance on movement restrictions, and access requirements for military installations
- Seek guidance from employers and unit leaders about changes to work practices (e.g., telework) and training events
- Wear a cloth face covering when you cannot maintain 6 feet of social distance in public areas or work centers
- Prepare for travel restrictions and cancellation of public gatherings, such as school, religious, and other community activities; make alternative arrangements for childcare
- Comply with medical orders for self-isolation or quarantine

COVID-19: Prepare for increased community spread

Orders for Self-Isolation

COVID 19
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

For current COVID-19 information:
<https://phc.amedd.army.mil/covid19>
<https://www.coronavirus.gov/>
 The Military Health System Nurse Advice Line is available 24/7:
 Call 1-800-874-2273 option #1
 or visit <https://www.health.mil/I-Am-A/Media-Center/NAL-Day-at-a-glance>
Pet Disaster Preparedness Kit
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/emergencies/pet-disaster-prep-kit.html>

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Army Public Health

The Army COVID-19 Information Hotline:
 1-800-984-8523
 Overseas DSN 312-421-370
 Stateside DSN 421-3700

TA-507-0320
04/09/2020

For more information, contact your installation's Department of Public Health
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

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Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Cleaning and Disinfection

As part of your everyday prevention actions, regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects. Cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection is a best practice for the prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in community settings.

Always wear appropriate personal protective equipment and use products as specified on the label.



Cleaning

Clean surfaces using soap and water daily. Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces, especially in common areas.

Frequently touched surfaces include tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.



Disinfection

Use diluted household bleach solutions if appropriate for the surface.

To make a bleach solution, mix:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water
- OR
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

Household cleaners and disinfectants: Clean the area or item with soap and water or another detergent, if it is dirty. Then, use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectant*.



Soft Surfaces

For soft surfaces such as **carpeted floors, rugs, and drapes**, remove visible soil with appropriate cleaners, then launder if possible. If not possible to launder, disinfect with an EPA-registered disinfectant*.



Laundry

Wash clothing and bed linens weekly using detergent and warm water. Dry completely. Do not shake dirty laundry. Clean and disinfect hampers after emptying.

More information:

TB MED 531 Facility Sanitation Controls and Inspections

*EPA Registered Disinfectants www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2



For current COVID-19 information:
<https://phc.amedd.army.mil/covid19>
<https://www.coronavirus.gov/>

The Military Health System Nurse Advice Line is available 24/7:
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The Army COVID-19 Information Hotline:
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Overseas DSN 312-421-3700
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COVID-19 Risk Reduction

Face Coverings

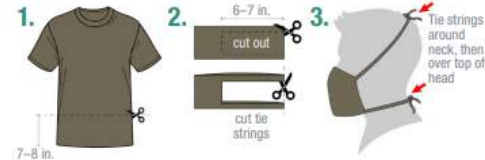


The primary purpose of a cloth face covering is to prevent the spread of coronavirus between people interacting in close proximity where social distancing measures cannot be maintained.

To the extent practical, DOD requires all persons on DOD property, installations, and facilities to wear cloth face coverings when they cannot maintain 6 feet of social distance in public areas or work centers (not to include housing).*

* For the guidance, visit <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Apr/05/2002275059/-1/-1/1/DOD-GUIDANCE-ON-THE-USE-OF-CLOTH-FACE-COVERINGS.PDF>

Make a cloth face covering from a t-shirt



Learn more: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

YOU SHOULD WEAR A SURGICAL MASK:

- when a medical provider diagnoses you with COVID-19
- if you are caring for someone confirmed to have COVID-19 (both you and the patient should wear masks when in close contact)



The face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders.



Army Combat Uniform (ACU) material is not recommended for use as a face covering because of the type of fabric used and the different treatments, like insect repellent and flame retardant, applied to the fabric.

Proper wear and care of cloth coverings

- Do not place cloth face coverings on children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the covering without assistance.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after putting on the cloth face covering.
- Ensure your nose, mouth and chin are covered; ensure the areas around the nose, sides, and chin are tight, but do not restrict your ability to breathe.
- Avoid touching the cloth face covering. Remove by grasping the elastic ear bands or untying. Do not touch the front of the covering.
- Routinely wash by hand, or in a washing machine, using warm water and regular detergent.

People need timely, accurate, credible information.



TA-524-0420
04/07/2020

For current COVID-19 information:
<https://phc.amedd.army.mil/covid19>
<https://www.coronavirus.gov/>

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version 1.0



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

Top 10 Tips to Protect Employees' Health

Healthy employees are crucial to your business. Here are 10 ways to help them stay healthy.

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Develop policies that encourage sick employees to stay at home without fear of reprisals, and ensure employees are aware of these policies.



Have conversations with employees about their concerns. Some employees may be at higher risk for severe illness, such as [older adults](#) and those with chronic medical conditions.



Develop other flexible policies for scheduling and telework (if feasible) and create leave policies to allow employees to stay home to care for sick family members or care for children if schools and childcare close.



Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about their plans. Discuss the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies.



Promote etiquette for [coughing and sneezing](#) and [handwashing](#). Provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, soap and water, and hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.



Plan to implement practices to minimize face-to-face contact between employees if social distancing is recommended by your state or local health department. Actively encourage flexible work arrangements such as teleworking or staggered shifts.



[CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)

[OSHA Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

Resources related to employee performance and well-being (meta analysis, 2017)



“In this crisis leaders can draw on a wealth of research, precedent, and experience to build organizational resilience through an extended period of uncertainty, and even turn a crisis into a catalyst for positive change.”

-McKinsey & Company, management consulting