

A Stressed Mind is a Tired Mind

The past few years have brought along an unexpected flood of disease, social and political conflict, job loss, changes in business practices and changes in our communities and families. The dramatic experiences and devastating losses have left many of us feeling shaken. Peace of mind seems elusive. Stress and fatigue are nagging companions.

Each of us has our own list of reasons for feeling the weight of stress at times, but must we continually live with a sense of dread and fear? It's important that we place our focus on the things within our control. Each of us can exercise control over the major aspects of our personal well-being. We can choose to eat nutritious food and hydrate with plenty of water. We can take a few minutes to stand and move through the Alertness Exercises during our shift. Most importantly, we can choose to make sleep a priority.

Sometimes, the difficulties we face at home and in the workplace bring us to the end of our coping mechanisms. Fortunately, there are professionals such as mental health providers, counselors, religious leaders and trusted friends who are available to provide support and guidance. It's good to seek help when life becomes overwhelming.

Living in stressful times gives us an opportunity to develop greater resilience. Resilience is the ability to adapt and rebound following a setback. It won't make problems disappear, but developing resilience and seeking support can help us see past the challenges and find reasons for hope and joy in the midst of them. When we are well-rested and properly fueled, we may find it easier to develop one or more coping strategies to help us in our given situations.

In 2020 and 2021, Pipeline Performance Group conducted research with twenty control rooms on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. All of the control rooms had reduced their on-site support personnel and made changes to shift schedules. For some Controllers, these changes contributed to a more relaxed and focused control room. Some took this time to update processes

and back-up systems. However, Controller's individual resilience scores varied widely, from very low to very high.

Some warning signs which may indicate a high level of stress include, but are not limited to:

- Muscle tension
- Mental distraction or the inability to maintain focus
- Headaches
- Depression, apathy or anxiety
- Heart palpitations
- Upset stomach
- Weakened immune system or frequent illness

Talk with your physician if symptoms such as these persist. Your physician can help with problems you have getting the rest you need. Allow the professionals to confirm there are no underlying risks to your health and make recommendations to help you feel better.

Move forward doing the good that's within your control and seek support when needed to help achieve rest and build your resilience against stress.

