

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### **Taking Care of Yourself: Brain Healthy Support for Emergency Responders, Medical Professionals and Caregivers**

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond.*

Thank you to our emergency responders, medical professionals and caregivers working to support our community during COVID-19. You are at the front-line of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Every day you experience increased risk for physical, mental and emotional consequences secondary your responsibilities and the heightened and prolonged stress of COVID 19.

Despite your extensive training and preparation for large-scale crises and emergencies, as a front-line professional, you likely have found that you need to adapt to the ever-changing CDC guidelines and the impact of COVID-19 on our community. It is important to be prepared for the increased levels of stress you are, or will likely, encounter as this pandemic evolves.

The CDC recommends some important steps so you can do your job while coping with this challenging situation.

**Prepare for Response:** Learn as much as possible about how your role and actions during response have changed secondary to COVID 19. Preparing and over-rehearsing, even if only in your mind, increases the performance of your brain and body during response.

**During the Response:** Don't allow stress to build up. Understand, identify and take action on burnout and secondary traumatic stress and develop techniques to deal with them, like those listed below.

**Team Support:** By working together you can support, monitor, acknowledge and respond to each other's stress, workload, and safety.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO *BOOST* YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

### *Practice a Brain Healthy Lifestyle*

- Limit working hours to no longer than 12-hour shifts.
- Work in teams and limit the amount of time working alone.
- Record your observations, thoughts and feelings in a journal.
- Talk to family, friends, supervisors, and teammates about your feelings and experiences.
- Practice breathing and relaxation techniques.
- Maintain a healthy diet and get adequate sleep and exercise.
- Know that it is okay to draw boundaries and say “no.”
- Avoid or limit caffeine and use of alcohol

From CDC, *Emergency Responders: Tips for taking care of yourself*:  
[emergency.cdc.gov/coping/responders.asp](https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/responders.asp)

### **About the Brain Health Initiative ([www.brainhealthinitiative.org](http://www.brainhealthinitiative.org))**

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is a collaborative effort with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, and the Academy for Brain Health and Performance to build brain healthy communities through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention and optimization of performance*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the brain health movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference***. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).

