

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST

Brain Health First Aid: Assessing Your Stress Levels

There is no denying it, these are stressful times for just about everyone. This especially includes those on the frontline, such as educators, social service providers, healthcare providers, first responders, and other caregivers, even parents.

While stress is a normal part of every day, an ongoing heightened experience of stressful situations may require some Stress First Aid. Originally developed for those in high-risk occupations (e.g., military, fire and rescue, and law enforcement), it can easily be adapted for educators and others involved in this new way of supporting others during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stress First Aid focuses on brain health protective behaviors of self-care and peer support.

The Stress Continuum Model is a foundational part of Stress First Aid, it shows stress reactions occur on a continuum. The model teaches that early awareness and response can bring us into a less severe zone before the need for more formal intervention. Recognizing the signs of orange zone stress in yourselves and others can help promote brain health and fight brain illness by preventing stress reactions from progressing into the Red Zone.

READY (Green)	REACTING (Yellow)	INJURED (Orange)	ILL (Red)
<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimal functioning Adaptive growth Wellness <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At one's best Well trained and prepared In control Physically, mentally, and spiritually fit Mission focused Motivated Calm and steady Behaving ethically Having fun 	<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild and transient distress or loss of functioning Always goes away Low risk for illness <p>CAUSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any Stressor <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling irritable, anxious, or down Loss of motivation Loss of focus Difficulty sleeping Muscle tension or other physical changes Not having fun 	<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More severe and persistent distress or loss of function Leaves a "scar" Higher risk for illness <p>CAUSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life Threat Loss Inner Conflict Wear and Tear <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of control Panic, rage, or depressed mood Substance Abuse Not feeling like normal self Excessive guilt, shame, or blame Diminished sense of purpose, meaning, or hope in the future 	<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unhealed stress injury causing life impairment Clinical mental disorder <p>TYPES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PTSD Depression Anxiety Substance Dependence <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symptoms persist and worsen over time Sever distress, social or occupational impairment

Nash, W. P. (2011). *US Marine Corps and Navy combat and operational stress continuum model: A tool for leaders. Combat and operational behavioral health, 107-119.*

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Practicing the “Seven C’s of Stress First Aid” can help you: manage stress in yourself; monitor and support others through their stress; lead to better brain and body functioning; and keep you out of the red zone.

1. **Check.** Assess, observe and listen.
2. **Coordinate.** Get help and refer as needed.
3. **Cover.** Get to a safe place.
4. **Calm.** Slow down, relax, re-focus.
5. **Connect.** Get support from others.
6. **Competence.** Restore effectiveness.
7. **Confidence.** Restore self-esteem and hope.

For more information about Seven C’s of Stress First Aid, [click here](#):

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to promoting brain health and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. Through education, research, innovation and action the collaboration between Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, and the Academy for Brain Health and Performance intends to build brain healthy communities with cultures that increase brain health protective factors and reduce risk factors, improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Gulf Coast region and beyond. Join the movement, lifestyle makes a difference.

To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).