



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
TEACHING HOSPITAL

**BRAIN
HEALTH
INITIATIVE**



ACADEMY FOR
BRAIN HEALTH
AND PERFORMANCE



Brain Health Matters and Emotional Protective Equipment (EPE) Make a Difference Reopening Requires the Use of EPE — Emotional Protective Equipment

Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic reached the United States, the phrase personal protective equipment, or PPE, has become part of our everyday vocabulary. How to get it, when to use it, how to use it, who should use it — we are becoming experts in PPE.

But now, as the Suncoast and the rest of the country start to re-open, it's time to learn about EPE – ***emotional protective equipment, a brain health essential***. In a recent post in *The Conversation*, health and medical educators at Michigan State University discussed the increase in stress, anxiety, depression, substance use, and post-traumatic stress disorder that can follow an event like the COVID-19 pandemic. The article included what we can do to help ourselves and how organizations can help others.

Businesses and organizations can help employees and clients heal and feel physically and emotionally safe by being transparent about the precautions being taken in the workplace. BHI encourages organizations to listen to the people who work for them and ask what they need. Be trustworthy, transparent and do what you can, and do what you say you're going to do.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

- **Acknowledge that you may be experiencing a stressful situation.** Practicing a brain healthy lifestyle can help strengthen your body and brain to manage and be resilient to these very real stressors (e.g., exercising, eating right, regulating sleep, practicing kindness and being grateful, thinking positive thoughts and increasing positive emotions, embracing others even from afar and maintaining your routine).
- **Be kind to yourself.** You have survived stressful situations in the past and you will survive this one, too. Try focusing on positive thoughts. What would you tell a friend going through this situation? Now tell *yourself* those same things to help reduce your anxiety.
- **Practice mindfulness.** Put distance between you and your negative thoughts. If you feel anxious, acknowledge the feeling, then let it go. Staying focused on the present

can help you feel a greater sense of control over your anxiety.

- **Know when to step back from the information avalanche.** You may think being informed can help calm your fears, but in many cases, it has the opposite effect and actually adds to your anxiety. Try to find a balance of getting the information you need but protecting your brain health by knowing when to turn off the news.



Listen to this week's BHI playlist

We are a long way from getting back to normal. In fact, we don't even know what normal is going to look like in the future. But we can fortify our brain health, fight brain illness and collective resilience by developing our emotional protective equipment (EPE).

[Read The Conversation article.](#)

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

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI works collaboratively 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, research, innovation and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention, and performance optimization*. 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](#).**