

HR Lessons for Managing Stress During COVID-19



On April 17, 2020 Rosen Group sponsored a virtual forum for HR leaders to discuss their approaches to stress management for themselves and their employees during this challenging time of quarantine amid the COVID-19 crisis. Moderated by Scott Rosen, over 40 HR professionals participated and shared their wisdom with one another. Here's a recap of what we heard. To watch the one-hour event, go to: <https://youtu.be/vNX484twlPg>

WORKPLACE PRACTICES

- Take angst away from employees by being clear in communications
- CEO posting weekly videos – less than five minutes
- Send out “resource” emails each Friday: a collection of emails about self-care, exercising at home, virtual tours of places (e.g., Frank Lloyd Wright houses)
- Encourage the team’s philanthropy (e.g., using available resources to make masks)
- Reinforce messages of core values: “We are one family – helping each other, helping within the community”
- Don’t “press” too much or overdo it with employees – don’t check on them constantly; provide them the resources they need in a practical manner
- Encourage yourself as an HR professional to be honest with yourself; it’s okay to have a bad day
- Stay engaged and pay it forward
- Hold Zoom meetings that are somewhere between “tactical” and “happy hour” – where you can talk about work but in a relaxed setting
- Executives hold “Zoom rooms” where people can drop in and speak to upper management for a few minutes (like stopping by their office in the workplace) – this reinforces companionship
- Find out not just what employees want – but what they need from HR
 - Sending out a short poll survey to determine employees’ needs
- Calm employee fears about job elimination:
 - Keep employees informed and be honest; don’t sugarcoat the situation
 - If they are getting laid off, do whatever you can to educate them on the resources through the Department of Labor (e.g., unemployment, re-training) and other programs available through the Federal Government
- Conduct an informal daily check-in – share pictures of family, pets, and family activities
- If your company has the resources, refer employees to employee assistance program so that they can find professional help or resources online
- Conduct Wellness Wednesday webinars
 - Tips for parents adjusting to parenting during COIV-19 quarantine
 - “Cook-along” videos
- Encourage employees to reset their expectations on what it looks and feels like to be productive during the pandemic and working remotely – be understanding toward each other

PERSONAL PRACTICES

- Deep breathing exercises/ meditation
- Doing puzzles
- Try creating new recipes
- Zoom “Happy Hours” & hangouts with friends and family
- Support small businesses
- Have rational responses to fear (social distancing, hand washing, etc.)
- Get enough sleep
- Exercise/online workouts
- Maintain a balanced diet
- Manage outside news – don’t overload
- Create routines for yourself (e.g., exercise in the morning)
- P.I.E.S. – Take care of yourself Physically, Intellectually, Emotionally, Spiritually
- Create a “Circle of Support” – open up with friends with whom you can be emotionally vulnerable
- Find something humorous each week to share with family and friends
- Get some fresh air (while still social distancing)
- Avoid toxic people and relationships
- Be kind to one another – recognize that not everyone’s situation is the same
- Consult a mental health hotline if needed

CAREER TRANSITION

- Continue to learn, stay engaged, and remain positive