

## Coronavirus disease COVID-19



### Psychological recommendations for journalists

#### *Journalists and helping the society*

1. **Be aware that as media representatives, you are indispensable in crisis situations,** you have a great opportunity to support, stabilize emotions in society, and you influence the specific behaviour of people.
2. **Strengthen and calm yourself mentally.** Recognize and name your own emotions in order to control them. Try to act in a rational, structured, calm and ethical way.
3. **Do not contribute to spreading fear, panic and catastrophic forecasts.** Remember that your reporting will **affect readers and viewers**. Keep in mind that the content of the message as well as the tone you use to convey it can impact how the society responds to the situation.
4. **Encourage. Present the ways people help and the ways they can help.** Give room for encouraging reactions and opinions of people.
5. **Helping others helps.** Communicate this value to others, look for it, pass it on, inform and write about it, depict it.
6. Promote **hope, the values of social cohesion, solidarity and community support.**
7. Promote **helping especially vulnerable persons** (elderly people, people with sensory, physical or mental disabilities, sick people, homeless people, members of minorities, foreigners etc.).
8. Promote **a sense of coping and resilience** through appropriate examples and recommendations. Focus on positive examples. Encourage the perception “Together, we can manage!”.
9. Use **key and verified sources in the areas of health, hygiene** and more. Repeatedly, inform people about the main recommendations. Beware of rumours, fictions and half-truths, because once they are published in the media, they get the “hallmark of truth” in the eyes of the public.
10. **Describe what is going on well, describe the activities of the rescue service teams** or crisis management procedures.

#### *Accountability to others*

1. You are responsible for those you speak to, and for those you work with, and for those who work for you. **You can provide first psychic aid to affected persons** (see the Application link below), you can help stabilize them.
2. **Introduce yourself clearly and respect if the other person does not want to talk to you.**
3. **Treat** people affected by stress and disaster **properly, with humility and respect. Respect their privacy,** needs and feelings. Act fairly.
4. **Be aware that the respondent may be in a state of psychological shock. Express your understanding,** imagine yourself in his/her place, act **sensitively, tactfully and with dignity. Speak calmly, slowly and clearly. Listen patiently.** The other may speak hastily, may be poor in expressing himself/herself, be disoriented, anxious and restless, or conversely without emotions. From the first reactions, one cannot conclude how deeply a person is affected.
5. **Do not push affected people for information.** Your word or picture can cause a secondary traumatization.

6. When health care professionals and doctors treat or accompany, **let them work quietly**. The same applies to members of the Police, Fire Rescue Corps and key professions' staff.
7. **Appreciate the extraordinary work and personal commitments** of the staff of professions highly exposed during the crisis management, **express your appreciation to them** (nurses, doctors, Police members, firefighters, caregiving services, social workers, managers, lab technicians, cleaning services, transport or critical infrastructure workers, and others).
8. **In case you lead others, you are responsible for your journalists, provide them with a safe working environment**, appropriate equipment, time for rest. Ask about their needs, keep supporting them. Do not expose them to risk. Give them credit. Even a journalist is not immune to stress, human misery and emotions he/she reports. The excessive load can manifest as fatigue, irritability, behavioural fluctuations, relationship problems or alcohol problems.

### ***Accountability to yourself***

1. **Take care of your own safety.**
2. **Be aware of your capabilities and skills.**
3. **Speaking to colleagues** with similar work experience **helps**.
4. **Look for the positive aspects of life**, be interested in other things as well.
5. **Try to relax and recharge your batteries**. Balance your workload with rest. Enjoy hobbies, sports, family and friends, relax.
6. **Human misery you encounter at work can have an impact on our psyche and interpersonal relationships. Admit that we can each have our limits.** It is possible to consult a doctor, psychologist, clergyman. The experience can be discussed anonymously on the Helpline.

### ***Recommended sources***

- **Ministry of the Interior:**  
<https://www.mvcr.cz/mvcren/article/psychosocial-support-guidelines.aspx?q=Y2hudW09Mw%3d%3d>

(Publications for journalists, drafted by Psychology Section)

PhDr. Štěpán Vymětal, Ph.D.  
Security Policy Department of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic  
- Psychology Section  
ICP 2020 The Crises, Disaster and Trauma Psychology Working Group Chair  
EFPA - Standing Committee on Crisis, Disaster and Trauma Psychology

Version as of March 19, 2020