



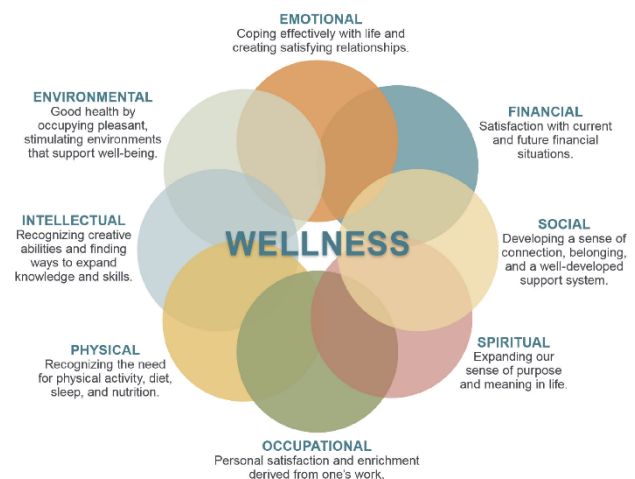
NFFE Update on Coronavirus

April 10, 2020

How Are You Doing?

As we are slowly settling into our new reality, I'm finding that this simple question elicits such tremendously different responses. Personality, health, economic circumstances, amount of personal control over their situation, competing demands, and health of self and loved ones all affect how people are coping. The isolation and uncertainty is beginning to wear on us all, and the 8-dimensions of wellness ([image courtesy of SAMHSA](#)) are all adversely affected to some extent by the situation that we are in.

Additionally, this week marks important religious holidays, for both Jews and Christians with Passover, Holy Week, and Easter. Later this month, Muslims will begin observing Ramadan. These are important religious observations where Jewish seders, Muslim iftars, and Christian Easter services are observed with family and loved ones. Digital gatherings are the mode de jour of connecting with others, but it's hard to give a hug, reach out to support someone who needs you, or even dry a tear through a computer screen. With the rural nature of the Forest Service, technology limitations prevent even digital gatherings.



With these challenges in mind, I encourage you to find ways to take care of yourselves. Develop routines to assert some control over a largely uncontrollable situation; exercise; meditate; eat well; try to get a good nights' sleep; adjust expectations, and seek assistance if you are struggling. Your Union officials can assist with workplace issues or to help connect you to someone who can help. A number of resources for assistance for you or your family are available at the end of this message, including the National Suicide Prevention Hotline and the Forest Service Employee Assistance Program (EAP). While employees may roll their eyes at the mention of EAP, I know of many very powerful success stories from people who have contacted them for assistance. They are a confidential and free source available to all Forest Service employees. **There is no shame in seeking a helping hand or a listening ear.**

Union Survey Results

Our survey from last week clearly highlights how your circumstances affect your perception of how things are going. I was particularly struck by how people who are unable to telework fulltime view how the Forest Service is doing, and for those with dependents, how the personal are doing. This was certainly not a scientific survey, but the results certainly point to the situations that are causing the most pain. As mentioned in the 4/1 Union Covid Update, no one should be required to take annual leave due to lack of work to do while teleworking. If you are, PLEASE contact a Union official.

If you did not take the survey ...

If you work for the Forest Service and did not receive the survey link, please send a message to NFFE.FSC@gmail.com, giving your name and your work unit.

Employee situation	# of respondents	Average Grade	How's FS doing	How are you doing?
FT Telework, No Dependents	218	8.76	3.34	3.61
FT Telework, Dependents	155	9.28	3.13	3.35
Not FT TW, Work related*	76	7.44	2.43	3.25
Not FT TW, Dependent related**	65	9.36	2.44	2.56

* Among employees whose work does not permit fulltime telework, 13 have been told they must take leave, while 3 have been granted Weather and Safety Leave, and one has been returned to nonpay status.

** Among those unable to telework fulltime due to providing care to dependents, an average of 16 hours of leave is used each pay period.

Helping Others

While we Forest Service employees are worried about our health and our work, we are still financially better off than many. Over 17 million workers have filed for unemployment as they have completely lost their livelihood as a result of businesses closing and laying workers off. Many of these workers are the ones who provide the services, food, and entertainment that we normally enjoy when we are not isolating. If you are able to support these workers and their employers through local donations or purchasing gift cards, you will be helping the ultimate recovery. Additionally, a number of national unions have donation drives to assist the workers they represent. <https://aflcio.org/covid-19/labor-movement-relief-funds>. If you are feeling financially secure in these times of turmoil, please try to lend a hand.

Melissa Baumann, PhD
President, NFFE Forest Service Council

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

800-773-8255

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

General resources

FS EAP Providers

- Region 1 and 6: ESPYR/EAP Consultants at (800) 869-0276
- Region 4: ComPsych at (888) 290-4327
- All Other Units: FOH at (800) 222-0364
- JCCCs** and WO detached/virtual employees are to use the services where they are geographically aligned.

AFL-CIO directory of resources

<https://aflcio.org/covid-19/state-resources>

Financial Assistance

Federal Employee Education and Assistance

<https://feea.org/our-programs/emergency-loans/coronavirus-loans/>

Forbearance for Student Loans

<https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/coronavirus>

Resources for First Responders

Safe Call Now is a 24-hour referral service for first responders and their families. 206-459-3020, <https://www.safecallnow.org/>

First Responder Support Network provides educational treatment programs for first responders and their families. 415-721-9789, <http://www.frsn.org/>

Serve & Protect connects public safety service professional with trauma counseling services. 615-373-8000, <https://serveprotect.org/>

Resources for Union Members

IAMAW EAP Services: Email: iameap@iamaw.org or call 301-335-0735.

IAMAW Substance Abuse Services: 1-888-250-4IAM (4426)

Free College: If this coronavirus has you thinking of a change in career, or looking for things you might do to improve your skills while you can't go out in the evenings/weekends, the IAM offers free college (Associates Degree and Certificate Programs) online. This is a fabulous opportunity for members and their families. Enroll now for classes starting on June

1. <https://freecollege.goiam.org/>

HOW TO HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

DO....

- Listen without judgement
- Ask "how can I help?"
- Let them know you care
- Validate their feelings
- Tell them you want to hear - they're not a burden
- Listen with the intention to understand, not fix
- Ask when you have time to listen
- Be patient
- Keep in touch even if you get no response
- Empathise

DON'T....

- Interrupt or speak over
- Tell them how they should feel
- Jump in with solutions
- Belittle their feelings
- Pressure them to speak
- Tell them the illness or feelings they have are a choice
- Say "you just need to..." (it's not that simple)
- Diagnose them when you're not qualified
- Leave them out
- Be scared to speak about feelings
- Be critical or blaming

#REALCONVO

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