

Supporting loved ones who are Key Workers

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenging time for us all. Having most of our social occasions and holiday plans restricted has made life for many people a little grey. Mix that with lockdown measures and having to stay at home, with many also experiencing bereavement, feelings of anxiety, isolation and financial worries to name a few - it is easy to see how so many people's wellbeing has been affected during this time.

Although the restrictions and lockdown have affected everyone differently; key workers have had it from all angles, as not only have their social and leisure plans been brought to a halt like everyone else, their stress levels at work have increased tenfold during the crisis, especially for those working in the healthcare sector.

Many of us know a key worker, whether they are a friend, family member or partner; it is important that we support them through this tough time, as they support us and others. Below are a few things to consider.

Consider the pressures they are experiencing

We have all felt the mental strain during COVID-19 but for many of us, we have just had to put up with staying home. Key workers are still working and may be dealing with people with heightened stresses making the environment more stressful than usual. Healthcare workers are going to be dealing with the pressure of short staff, unwell patients and an ever increasing pressure of rising COVID-19 numbers and the emotional turmoil of witnessing people passing without any family around them.

It can be easy to forget what key workers are dealing with from day to day because they go to work as normal, but their time at work during this current crisis is far from it. Factor in the uncertainty of when this might end and take away the things they look forward to such as holidays, all they have is increased stress and not much to look forward to.

Keep in touch and check in

Staying in contact seems an obvious one but it can be all too easy to let it slip, especially when things are looking up and our own lives can take precedent. However, it is important to just check in every now and then. Just touching base, maybe a message or a quick phone call can make all the difference to someone who is feeling the pressures.

If you live with a key worker, ensure they know you're there to talk to about work should they want to. It can be common for key workers to try not to bring work home with them, especially

in times like these so they can end up bottling up. Try to speak with them, ask questions, show interest in how their day was and be a shoulder to cry on if they need it.

Help to make their lives easy at home

Try your best to make home their space to relax and wind down. See if there is anything you can do to help to take a load off of them, whether that's helping to get things ready for their next day of work, cook dinner ready for them etc.

After having a long and stressful day at work, coming home to someone who has taken the initiative to help and support them will not go unnoticed, it will give them a sense of support from you and also a sense of recognition that their work days are particularly hard at the moment.

Understand the affects of high stress

If a loved one is a key worker and is dealing with high pressure and stress from day to day it is common for tempers to be shorter than usual, or not seeming their usual selves. Try to understand that this could be down to the stresses at work and what they might say or do might not be a true reflection, it may just be an outburst of emotion. When this happens try to remain calm and not to escalate the situation. When things are stressful at work things need to remain as calm as possible at home.

Supporting our key workers through this tough time

We are all having our own experiences with the COVID pandemic, our own stresses and angst, but it is important that we all support each other during these times. It has been almost a year since the first lockdown and this sustained disruption of our way of life has been difficult, but there is hope that things will be getting better soon. Our key workers and especially those working within healthcare are experiencing something they never thought they would have to go through. It is vital that we support them through what we hope is this final, but most stressful final stretch.

More information

If you would like to view the Webinar on '**Supporting loved ones who are key workers**' this is being delivered live on **Wednesday 20th January at 12pm**, please use the following link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1084412446715561484>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.

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