Stress is NORMAL. Too much stress of any kind, can have significant impacts on our functioning. Stress typically affects us in several domains:

**What You Can Do About It:**

- **Common PHYSICAL Symptoms:**
  - Fatigue
  - Nausea/diarrhea (GI issues)
  - Muscle tension
  - Elevated heart rate
  - Grinding teeth
  - Headaches

  *Symptoms requiring medical evaluation – chest pain, difficulty breathing, sweating, chills, shock-like symptoms.*

- **Common COGNITIVE Symptoms:**
  - Confusion
  - Difficulty making decisions
  - Trouble concentrating
  - Hyper-vigilance
  - Memory problems
  - Nightmares/intrusive images
  - Heightened or lowered alertness
  - Inability to focus

- **Common EMOTIONAL Symptoms:**
  - Anxiety
  - Guilt
  - Grief
  - Denial
  - Fears
  - Depression
  - Irritability
  - Frustration/Anger
  - Loss of emotional control

- **Common BEHAVIORAL Symptoms:**
  - Withdrawal
  - Isolation
  - Restlessness
  - Startle reflex
  - Emotional outbursts
  - Loss or increase in appetite

  *Insomnia or excessive sleep
  - Suspiciousness
  - Alcohol usage
  - Somatic complaints
  - Hyper alertness*

Everybody responds differently to stress depending on many factors, including pre-existing stressors, coping strategies, support system, etc. There ARE some things you can do to reduce the impact:

- **First and foremost:** Pay attention to these symptoms! As healthcare professionals, we are not likely to do this but need to.
- **Take a break if you can.** Even 5-10 minutes might help you recharge and refocus.
- **Get regular exercise** or some type of physical activity.
- **Practice or learn relaxation techniques,** e.g. deep breathing, yoga, mindfulness, tai chi, massage, read, etc.
- **Structure your time/maintain your routine.**
- **Eat a healthy, balanced diet, get plenty of rest** even if you don’t feel like it.
- **Avoid alcohol, tobacco use, drugs** – they simply numb what you are feeling and delay recovery.
- **Don’t make big decisions.**
- **Share your stress,** reach out to others, get involved in things you enjoy.
- **If isolated at home,** reach out to others via social media, email, text, phone.
- **Learn a new hobby,** listen to music, clean your house, complete projects on your to-do list, etc.
- **Give yourself permission to feel rotten** (for a while).
- **Make as many daily decisions as you can** that give you a feeling of control.
- **Recognize that dreams, flashbacks, recurring thoughts are normal.** They’ll decrease over time and be less intrusive.
- **Tell your family, friends and co-workers what would be helpful to you.**
- **Check in with your primary care providers,** especially if you have pre-existing medical conditions.

Consider using Allen Hospital’s Employee Assistance Program (319-235-3550), Black Hawk-Grundy Mental Health Center (319-234-2893) or UnityPoint Clinic Psychiatry (319-277-0992). These services are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.