

# Covering protests, Civil unrest

## Mental safety, Wellbeing tips



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As much attention as we pay to our physical safety, so is the importance of mental wellbeing. Regular attention to mental wellbeing and a robust mental wellbeing safety plan will equip journalists to work to professional standards within a safe work environment.

Two key areas you need to focus on are your individual work circumstances and the community you work in. Safety interventions in each of these two areas have to complement each other. One without the other will not work.

## Self-care



This is about how you take care of yourself and your own mental wellbeing as an individual. This relates to individual work patterns and work routines, applied by you, the journalist, on yourself. They require minimum intervention from others around you.

## Peer-support/duty of care

This relates to how a community takes care of individuals within it. This could be an organisation or even a group of colleagues who work for different organisations. Peer support can be a formal or informal plan. At its core, it is about how a community creates, maintains, and improves on a safe work environment for those within it. It requires measures that are practised as a group, and as individuals.



The initial step in creating a safe work environment for psychosocial wellbeing is the acknowledgement of the risks that are faced by individual journalists and by extended journalism communities while reporting on protests and civil unrest. As individuals we need to be ready to discuss these risks, and as organisations and managers we need to create a safe work culture for honest dialogue.

## Boundaries



It is important that we create boundaries between our work and our personal lives. Short and long breaks are important. Even during the most demanding of coverages, time away from work is important. Develop individual and group work schedules that allow for such breaks and implement them.

## Context

Protests and civil unrest in our own community create a work environment that journalists will find it hard to disengage from. Look for signs of impact like distress, emotional extremes, and change in personality, in you as well as your colleagues. If you feel that the current work context is creating a difficult mental situation, discuss with your colleagues and supervisors and take appropriate action.



## Reactions



Social upheaval creates a situation where reactions to your work will be more pronounced and possibly more extreme than under normal circumstances. These reactions will manifest both off-line, in person, and on-line, in digital forums. Be prepared for this as individuals and organisations. Assess the reactions you as individuals and organisations have received in the past, and how you, have reacted to them and taken appropriate measures.

## Digital Safety

Our work these days is heavily reliant on digital resources. Develop safe digital work routines. Pay attention to screen time, content consumption, content type, risks like trolling, abuse and doxing, and take appropriate measures.



## Physical Safety



Don't neglect your physical wellbeing, eat regularly and healthily, get sufficient sleep, be wary of substance abuse, exercise, and give your body time to rest and recuperate.

These are simple tips on mental wellbeing. Each of these focus areas would require detailed attention depending on their impact on individual journalists and journalism communities. Trauma impact can be a very intimate experience and it is essential that journalists feel safe within their personal and professional situations to deal with these unique but fluid threats.