

## HELPING YOUR STAFF MANAGE STRESS



Headington Institute

The best general principle of helping your staff manage stress is: ***Find out what about their work is causing them stress, and work with to develop a plan to manage that.*** This will help staff feel heard, understood, invested in finding a solution to their problems, and in at least partial control of the work conditions they find difficult.

The following tips may also prove useful...

- ***Be a good role model:*** Model good work-life boundaries (take breaks during the day, limit evening and weekend work).
- ***Seek to understand the local culture and normal grieving processes and methods of support:*** Understanding cultural expectations will be especially important in effectively and sensitively supporting national staff.
- ***Reduce environmental stressors:*** As much as possible ensure staff have basic needs met (food, clean water, shelter and safety).
- ***Basic management check:*** Review your basic management strategies:
  - Are work goals clearly outlined to workers and timely feedback on achievement provided?
  - Are instructions clear?
  - Are deadlines reasonable? (especially in light of conflict between your demands and other supervisor's demands)?
  - Have workers participated as much as possible in decisions that affect their work?
- ***Educate staff:*** Educate staff as to how stress and trauma affects the mind.
- ***Clear and complete communication:*** Communication about current conditions, crises and plans for future projects is crucial, especially in high-threat or disaster settings.
- ***Regular in-office defusing:*** Team members will benefit from regular times of simply sharing how their day has been and challenges they will be facing during the rest of the week. This can help people normalize difficulties, reduce anxiety and gain perspective. It can also help identify people who are regularly struggling or “stressed.”
- ***Regularly check in with how the staff you supervise are doing at a personal level:*** Preferably at least once every couple of weeks.
- ***Thank and affirm your staff:*** There may be no one else doing that, and such appreciation can be a balm during hard times.
- ***Schedule team building and social support enhancement activities:*** Research suggests that anything you can do to strengthen relationships among your staff and their social support networks will be effort well spent in helping staff cope with stress.