

TAKING CARE OF YOUR STAFF AFTER TRAUMA



Headington Institute

After a traumatic event, managers often struggle to know how to help their staff cope. The following are some tips for helping your staff begin to process traumatic events and when it is wise to encourage them to seek professional help:

After a traumatic event...

- Gather the team together
- Discuss what happened
- Totally disclose all known facts
- Share feelings and fears
- Address feelings and fears and problem-solve as a group
- Normalize feelings and fears. Reassure people that they are experiencing normal reactions to abnormal events
- Invite people to seek you out to talk
- Reduce job demands, activities and assignments and allow extra time to complete tasks
- Postpone decisions and initiatives
- Encourage staff to support each other and take care of themselves
- Give people room to react in their own ways, but seek out those evidencing signs of distress and follow-up with them.

Encourage a staff member to seek professional help if they report...

- Suicidal thoughts
- That they feel as if they are a danger to themselves or others
- Heart palpitations, chest pain, or other serious physical symptoms
- Severe psychological symptoms (e.g., flashbacks, amnesia, enduring feelings of unreality and “disconnection from the world,” feeling completely overwhelmed and paralyzed)
- History of mental illness and treatment
- Substance abuse (e.g., that they are using alcohol to help them sleep)
- Emotions are not falling into place over time. They are feeling chronic tension, confusion, emptiness and exhaustion
- Relationships are suffering