

TIP SHEET: COMMON REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

Following a major change, a loss, or a sudden, unexpected or traumatic event, employees will often look for guidance and support from leadership. Sometimes, managers are unsure how to respond. While each situation is unique, there are some general guidelines that managers can follow to ensure that they are able to address some of the most important needs of employees immediately following a traumatic event.

TIPS FOR MANAGERS

Take practical steps to reduce the source of the stress.

Communicate frequently with your employees.

Encourage teamwork and cooperation.

Set clear work expectations and provide feedback. Avoid overloading employees with tasks. Take time to listen to employees' concerns and frustrations.

Acknowledge the benefits of counseling during stressful times and encourage employees to contact the EAP or support.

Provide opportunities for employees to talk about their stressful experiences.

Remember that the EAP is a resource for employees and managers.

x Don't underestimate the impact of stress on you as an individual - take care of yourself.

Memory Lapses

Frequent Thoughts of the Event

PHYSICAL REACTIONS

Fatigue

Insomnia

Headaches

Nausea/Gastrointestinal Problems

Hunger or Loss of Appetite

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

Anger

Anxiety

Depression

Emotional Numbness

Apathy/Boredom

Frustration

BEHAVIORAL REACTIONS

Withdrawal from Others

Restlessness

Hyper Vigilance

Blaming Others

Substance Abuse

Changes in Normal Activities

For additional information regarding assisting employees following a traumatic event, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

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PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP YOU COPE

Find supportive people (family members, friends, colleagues) and talk with them about your experience. Don't carry this burden alone - share it with those who care about you.

Give yourself permission to acknowledge your feelings as they arise and that they are normal reactions.

Take care of yourself. Get enough rest and eat regularly. Keep up your exercise routine if you have one. Don't abuse drugs or alcohol - they can hinder your coping abilities.

Keep your life simple. Avoid other stressful situations for a while.

Practise meditation if you know how; if not, visualize a quiet scene. You may not always get away, but you can hold a vision in your mind to help you cope.