



## CLINICIAN AND STAFF PEER SUPPORT

# How to support a colleague

The first thing you can do to support a colleague is understand the common reactions to trauma. Everyone who has experienced or witnessed a traumatic event will experience it differently, but will typically have reactions that fall into four basic categories.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL

- Depressed mood
- Irritability
- Loss of interest or pleasure
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Feelings of inadequacy and loneliness
- Loss of trust
- Perceived indifference from colleagues
- Anger, guilt, frustration
- Inability to think or concentrate
- Recurrent images or thoughts of the event triggered by non-specific events
- Distress when you are exposed to events that remind you of the trauma
- Hypervigilance with everything you do
- Desire to connect with others experiencing similar trauma

### COGNITIVE

- Inability to think or concentrate
- Feeling distracted

### PHYSICAL

- Trouble eating
- Sleeping
- Fatigue
- Headaches

### BEHAVIORAL

- Hyperactivity, or less activity
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Social isolation
- Insomnia or sleeping excessive
- Strong need to talk about the event or read information surrounding the traumatic event

## Other things you can do

- Let colleague share their experience
- Be patient and allow for silence
- Express appreciation for sharing
- Reflect, interpret, and summarize
- Discuss some coping strategies
- Do they have a support system? Is it accessible?
- Ask if it's okay to follow up. Get contact information.
- Provide a resource list (if applicable)
- Verify if they are going to be okay
- When in doubt, refer
- Offer to send them literature on emotional impact

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