

When Trauma Strikes Your Organization

Tips for Managers

Whether an isolated catastrophic incident or prolonged stress, trauma can have an emotional and physical impact on your employees. The purpose of this handout is to provide you with a greater understanding of what you and your staff will likely encounter, as well as strategies for supporting your employees during this challenging time.

Expect a reaction. People react differently to traumatic events. How closely people are impacted by the trauma and previous experience with trauma influences how they will respond. Some employees may exhibit shock and disbelief while others may feel numb and overwhelmed. After the initial shock wears off, there may be a period when sleeplessness and worry take over. Exhaustion may eventually set in - especially in the absence of effective coping. Your employees may exhibit anger, sadness, crying, irritability and difficulty concentrating.

Be patient. Productivity may not return to normal for a while. If an employee is having an especially difficult time coping, encourage them to contact the EAP for confidential support. It is imperative to respond compassionately during this time.

Develop clear, open communications. The more informed your employees are regarding the situation, the more in control they feel. The more in control a person feels, the greater their resilience is in coping with difficult situations. A statement of concern and support from management will help your employees feel like you are all in this together.

Encourage open discussions. Provide opportunities for people to share their reactions with others. Having a chance to discuss their reactions in a safe environment allows them to cope more effectively. Some employees may choose to share and some may not.

Educate your employees. Provide your employees with an opportunity to learn about trauma and how it may impact them. Offer written materials that describe common reactions and coping strategies. Coordinate educational sessions that offer a chance to share experiences and to learn stress management techniques.

Practise and encourage self care. Your team is depending on you for leadership. Attend to your physical and emotional well-being. Get plenty of rest. Eat healthy. Limit your caffeine and alcohol intake. Connect with your family and friends. Reach out to other managers for mutual support. Encourage your employees to do the same.

Contact Workplace Solutions. Our team of professionals is available 24/7 for consultation, guidance and support in managing this difficult event.

