

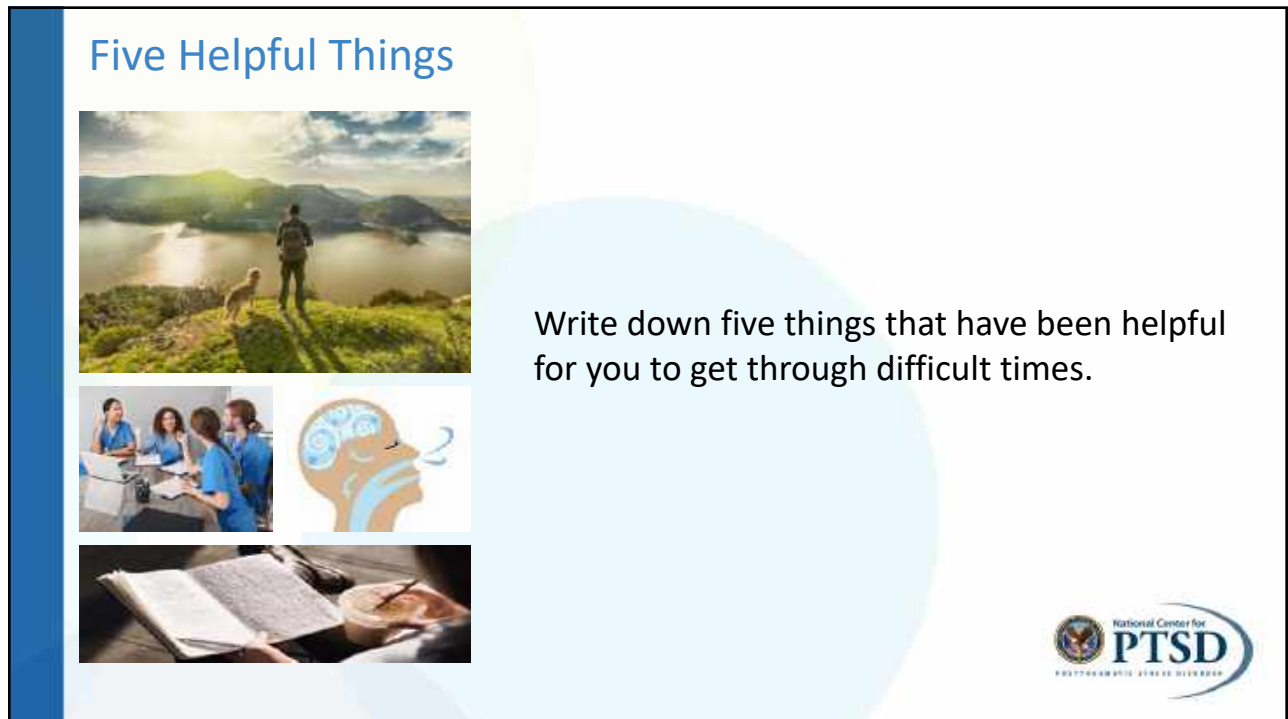
The cover page features a blue background on the left with a collage of images: a surgeon in a mask, a group of healthcare workers, and a close-up of a person's face with a surgical mask. On the right, the title "Stress First Aid" is written in large blue letters, with "for HEALTH CARE WORKERS" in smaller blue letters below it. A logo consisting of four overlapping circles (green, blue, purple, and light blue) is in the top right. The National Center for PTSD logo is in the bottom right.

*Patricia Watson, PhD
National Center for PTSD*

National Center for
PTSD
POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

1

Five Helpful Things



The slide contains three images: a person with a dog on a hill overlooking a lake, a group of healthcare workers in a meeting, and a person writing in a notebook. The text on the right asks the user to write down five helpful things. The National Center for PTSD logo is in the bottom right.

Write down five things that have been helpful for you to get through difficult times.

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PTSD
POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

2

Introductions

- Name
- Work
- Expectations





3

Learning Objectives


- Identify how to recognize stress injuries in health care professionals
- Describe how to administer Stress First Aid (SFA) at the individual level
- Describe SFA as a method of peer support at the organizational level



4




Background




5

What is Stress First Aid (SFA)?



- SFA is a set of practical actions that can:
- Raise awareness of the spectrum of stress reactions
- Help you talk about stress and stress reactions more easily
- Reduce stigma
- Mitigate the impact of stress
- Increase wellbeing
- Prevent longer lasting problems



6

Essential Elements in Recovery From Adversity and Stress

Psychiatry 70(4) Winter 2007 213

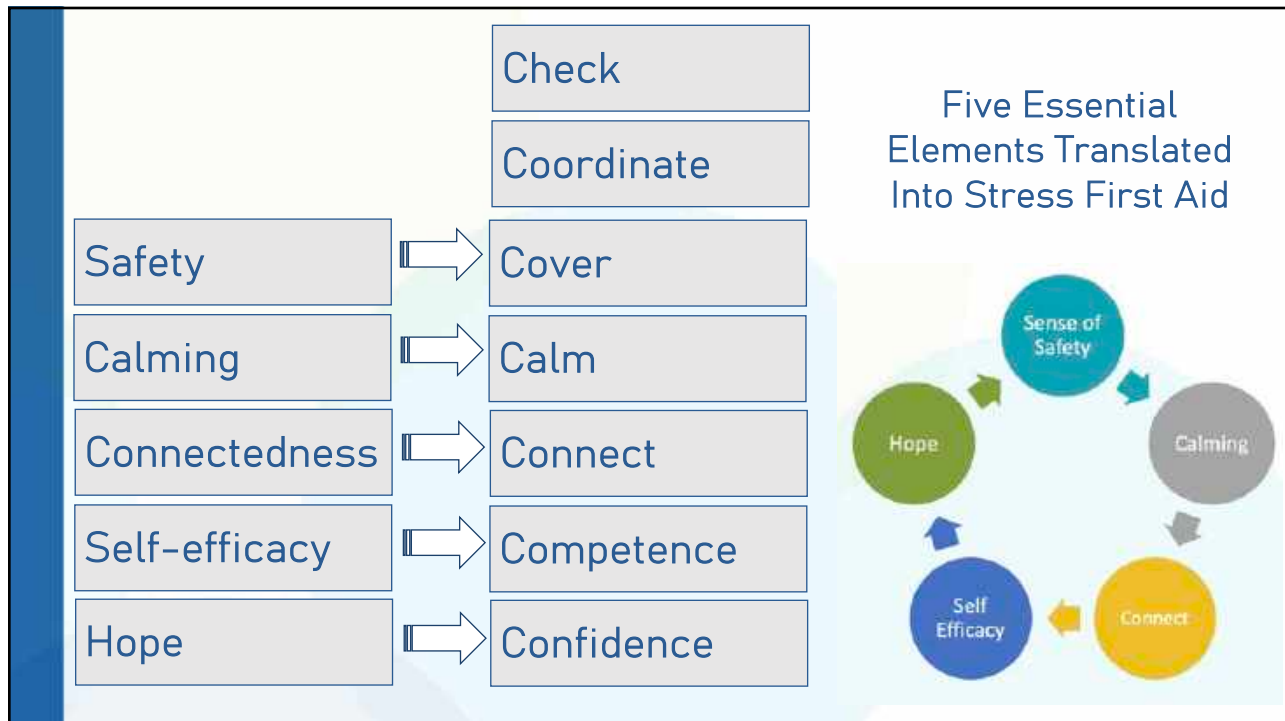
Five Essential Elements of Immediate and Mid-Term Mass Trauma Intervention: Empirical Evidence

Stevan E. Hobfoll, Patricia Watson, Carl C. Bell, Richard A. Bryant, Melissa J. Brymer, Matthew J. Friedman, Merle Friedman, Bertbold P.R. Gersons, Joop T.V.M de Jong, Christopher M. Layne, Shira Maguen, Yuval Neria, Ann E. Norwood, Robert S. Pynoos, Don Ransman, Josef I. Ruzek, Arich Y. Shalev, Zahava Solomon, Alan M. Steinberg, and Robert J. Ursano

7

<p>Stress may produce:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid grey; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Danger</div> <div style="border: 1px solid grey; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Distress</div> <div style="border: 1px solid grey; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Disconnection</div> <div style="border: 1px solid grey; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Dysfunction</div> <div style="border: 1px solid grey; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Despair</div>		<p>The 5 essential elements for overcoming adversity are:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid grey; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Safety</div> <div style="border: 1px solid grey; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Calming</div> <div style="border: 1px solid grey; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Connectedness</div> <div style="border: 1px solid grey; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Self-efficacy</div> <div style="border: 1px solid grey; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Hope</div>
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8



9

Stress First Aid Adaptations

The first SFA model, Combat Operational Stress First Aid (COSFA), developed for Marines Corps and Navy personnel, has been adapted for:

- Fire / EMS Professionals
- Rail workers
- Wildland Firefighters
- Law Enforcement Professionals
- Pretrial / Probation Officers
- Healthcare Workers
- Harm Reduction Workers

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How is Stress First Aid Different?

Rather than telling people **how** they should take care of themselves and support each other, SFA highlights the **importance** of self-care and coworker support

Because helpful support can often only arise with self-reflection, or in the unspoken understandings between those who work together.

It is frequently only in moment-to-moment behaviors or encounters that the right support can happen

If one is aware of its importance and open to being creative in self-care actions, or in accessing and giving support.

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Reasons for Stress First Aid

Acute Stress

- Short-lived and intense
- Might interfere with safety or functioning in the moment
- What you feel after a fatal or other difficult case
- Once the situation is resolved, it usually diminishes

Chronic Stress

- Long-term burn out
- Might be the result of traumatic or loss events or other ongoing situations
- Feelings may not have been dealt with and chronic stress remains
- Chronic physical health conditions linked to stress

Cost / Longevity

- Lowered morale or absenteeism/presenteeism
- Increased turnover of employees due to burn out
- Increased costs associated with hiring and training new employees due to turnover



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Reasons for Stress First Aid

- Stress can be positive, keeping us alert, motivated, and ready to avoid danger, but can become a problem when it continues without relief or periods of relaxation
- Stressful experiences may cause lingering or unresolved issues
- The need to focus under high demand
- Fear of being seen as weak
- Stigma surrounding asking for help
- Troubled sleep / health / mood / mind
- Relationship problems
- Elevated substance use
- Suicide risk



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Research on Nursing Workplace Stress

- Nurses have between a 35-45% burnout rate.
- Fifty percent of nurses have experienced bullying in the workplace.
- Suicide rates are 58% higher for female nurses and 41% higher for male nurses compared to the general US population.
- Healthcare workers in an inpatient setting are 5-12 times more likely to experience workplace violence.

The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity
 US Government Accountability Office: <http://www.gao.gov/assets/680/675858.pdf>



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Healthcare Research: Building Organizational Resilience



- Genuine interest in the wellbeing of staff
- Staff access to support
- Peer and social support
- Safe discussions of events and sharing
- Opportunities for coworkers to work collaboratively
- Work-life balance and boundaries
- Greater autonomy over time and content of work
- Regulated working hours
- Adequate staffing
- Meaningful recognition

Huey & Palaganas (2020)

Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety <https://ibhs.org/about-ibhs/ibhs-research-center/>



15

Three Main Stress First Aid Concepts

Stress Continuum



Tool to communicate and evaluate stress levels.

Stress Injury



Stressors that cause occupational stress injury.

Stress First Aid



Processes and actions that peers and leaders can use to address stress injuries.



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Stress Continuum



The slide features a blue background on the left with a graphic of four overlapping circles in shades of blue and green. A photograph of a healthcare worker in full PPE is positioned in the center. The title 'Stress Continuum' is written in blue text on the right. The National Center for PTSD logo is in the bottom right corner.

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Why is it Hard to Implement Solutions?



Pressing your forehead can help alleviate anxiety and stress.

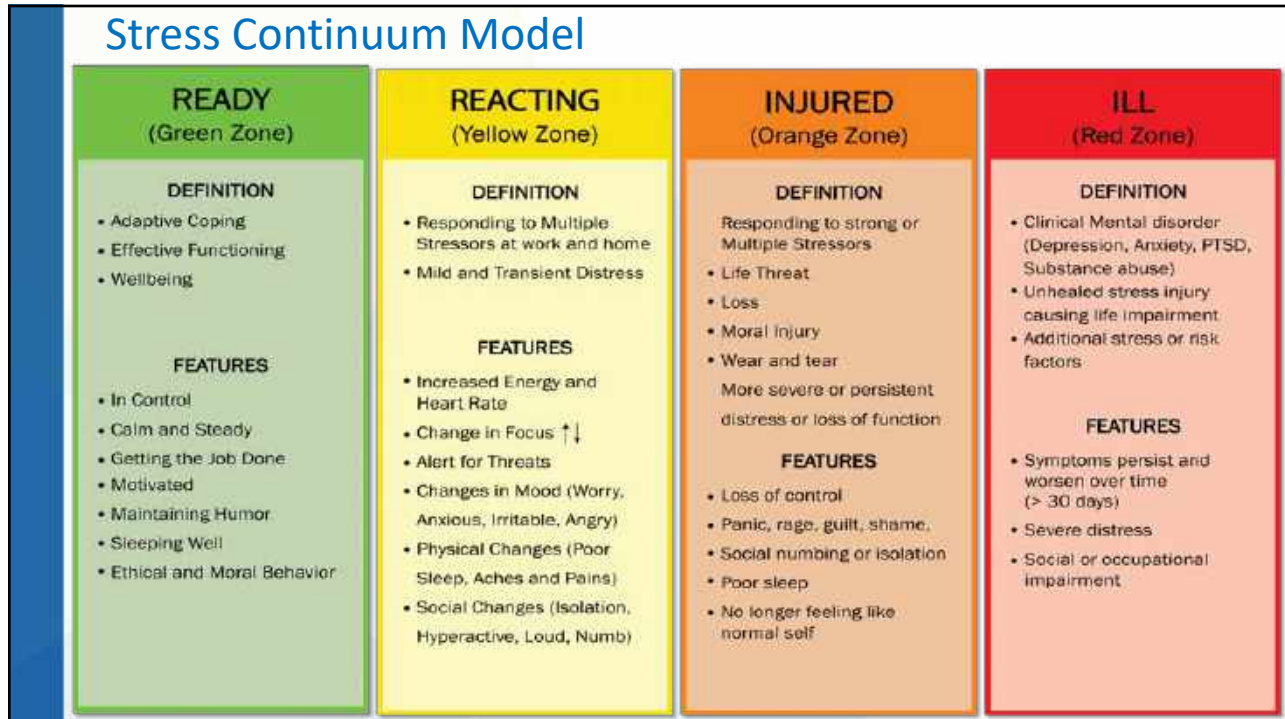
FIND YOUR CENTER.

Me:




The cartoon depicts a person's face with a red circle around the forehead. A speech bubble says 'FIND YOUR CENTER.' Below, a person is shown holding a baby's head. To the right, a donut with a face is meditating on a green mat. The National Center for PTSD logo is in the bottom right corner.

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Stress Zone Example




Alice sustained injuries from workplace violence.

She is now taking more time than normal to complete the vitals and struggles to keep up with her other duties.

She has expressed frustration about workplace violence and expresses that management doesn't understand the realities on the floor.

While Alice is normally engaged and takes pride in being a nurse, her feelings towards nursing have been taking a negative tone.

What might be Alice's zone?



20

Stress Injuries

- A stress injury is severe and persistent distress or loss of ability to function caused by damage to the brain, mind, or spirit after exposure to the overwhelming stressors
- Stress injury behaviors include
 - Impaired or diminished role function
 - Work, Spouse, Parent, Friend
 - No longer feeling like normal self
 - Excessive guilt, shame or blame
 - Panic, rage, or deep sadness



⊗ A stress injury goes beyond burnout ⊗

Burnout is NOT the failure of an individual to effectively cope.

Burnout is an expected reaction to unbalanced demands and resources.



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◆ Orange Zone Indicators



To recognize those who need help:

Look for the three Orange Zone Indicators:

- Recent stressor events
- Distress
- Changes in functioning



22

Stress First Aid (SFA) Model



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Green Zone Examples

- Ask teams in meetings: “What currently helps you regarding building resilience and capacity?”
- Build in brief trainings or shared experiences related to resilience.
- Regularly send out a messages such as: “I want to let everyone know that we know you’re working hard, and that we know there have been no increases in the number of adverse events. You guys are doing a wonderful job.”
- Root Cause of Success Analysis



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**Yellow Zone
Examples**

- Identify and address unnecessary stressors
- Leaders give the message, “I know your workload has gone up. The stress has been through the roof. What impact has that had? Help me understand. What would help?”
- Coworkers regularly reach out to support each other when known stressors are occurring.



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**Orange Zone
Examples**


- Continued leader focus on communication, regular praise, asking about needs.
- Remind people about the importance of SFA.
- Give trainings on skills and strategies that are helpful in navigating escalating work stress (breathing, assertiveness, conflict resolution, yoga).
- What factors in the environment contributed to the stress injury



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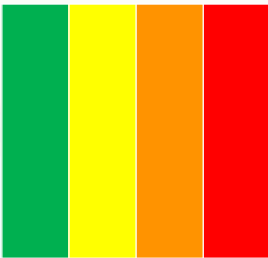
Red Zone Examples

- Highlight that if someone is concerned about more serious manifestations of stress like suicidal ideation, anxiety and depressive disorders, or substance use, seek support through EAP or other trained behavioral health professionals.
- Communication includes these messages:
 - The earlier someone gets connected to these resources, the better.
 - Going to behavioral health professionals or the EAP does not cause career harm.
- Plan for reintegration of a team member that needed a leave of absence




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Stress Continuum Example



“We have started using the colors in our briefs every day. Team members will place post-its on the color continuum and if it looks like a lot of team members are in the yellow or orange, we will huddle to talk about what’s causing the stress. One day, a team member shared that she was stressed because none of her patients were listening to her. I tapped her out to take a 30-minute break and we switched one of her difficult patients.”



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Stress Injury Example



“An employee appeared overwhelmed and self-reported orange. We determined what tasks others could assist with to alleviate some of the stress. The employee was satisfied with the teamwork.”



29

Double Edged Sword of Values and Ideals

Finding something important and meaningful in your life will help you sustain the effort needed to overcome the particular problems you face.


Placing the welfare of others above one's own welfare	Selflessness	Not seeking help for health problems because personal health is not a priority
Commitment to accomplishing missions and protecting others	Loyalty	Guilt and complicated bereavement after loss of others
Toughness and ability to endure hardships without complaint	Stoicism	Not aware of / acknowledging significant symptoms /suffering
Following an internal moral compass to choose "right" over "wrong"	Moral Code	Feeling frustrated and betrayed when others fail to follow a moral code
Becoming the best and most effective professional possible	Excellence	Feeling ashamed / denial or minimization of imperfections

Stress reactions are simply biological signals designed to nudge you in the direction of beneficial change. They are a sign that something is going unaddressed - a call to action.

Manson, 2016

30

Self-Assessment







Where do you currently sit on the stress continuum?




Green= Rested and Ready to Support Others
Yellow = Feeling Some Stress
Orange= The Strain and Drain is Taking a Toll
Red= Not sure how much more I can take


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<p>When I am READY: I feel (3 Emotions): _____ _____ _____</p> <p>I notice (3 physical symptoms/behaviors): _____ _____ _____</p> <p>3 Tools for Maintaining/Building Strength:  _____</p>	<p>When I am REACTING: I feel (3 emotions): _____ _____ _____</p> <p>I notice (3 physical symptoms/behaviors): _____ _____ _____</p> <p>3 Self-Care Tools to Reset:  _____</p>
<p>When I am DRAINING: I feel (3 Emotions): _____ _____ _____</p> <p>I notice (3 physical symptoms/behaviors): _____ _____ _____</p> <p>3 Self-Care Tools for Recovery:  _____</p>	<p>When I am DRAINING: I feel (3 Emotions): _____ _____ _____</p> <p>I notice (3 physical symptoms/behaviors): _____ _____ _____</p> <p>3 Ways to Get Help/Support:  _____</p>

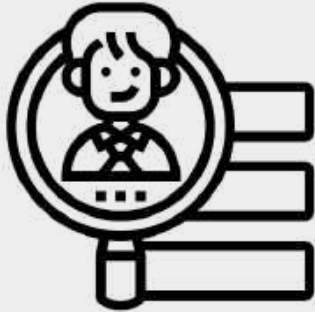
Support for me looks like:
 Describe what types of actions you prefer others to take when you are in the different zones of stress reactions.

 _____
 _____
 _____

<p>Stress Reaction Contact List: People I feel comfortable to share with when:</p> <p>REACTING (Green Zone) _____</p> <p>DRAINING (Orange Zone) _____</p> <p>DRAINING (Red Zone) _____ (Professional Resource)</p>	<p>Resources I Would Use:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p> When the going is tough, as much time as possible in the green zone allows you to when you feel your best, rehydrate, stretch, rest, and breathe. Be aware that you will likely be that zone all the time.</p> <p>Life happens. You will occasionally fluctuate between the zones. This is normal. Having a plan will help you with identifying where you are in the zones and options to rehydrate, stay aware and notice your alertness that you have and resources to support yourself.</p>
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Team Assessment



Where does your team currently sit on the stress continuum?

Green= Rested and Ready to Support Others

Yellow = Feeling Some Stress

Orange= The Strain and Drain is Taking a Toll

Red= Not sure how much more I can take

33

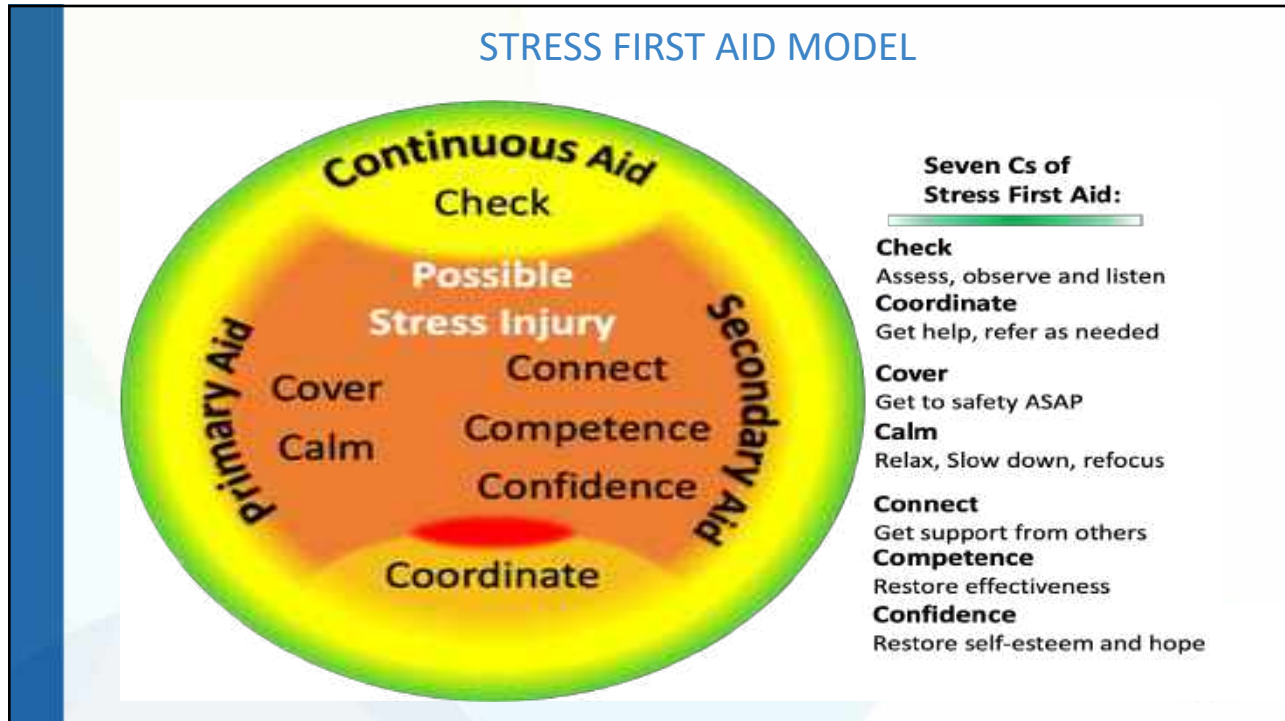
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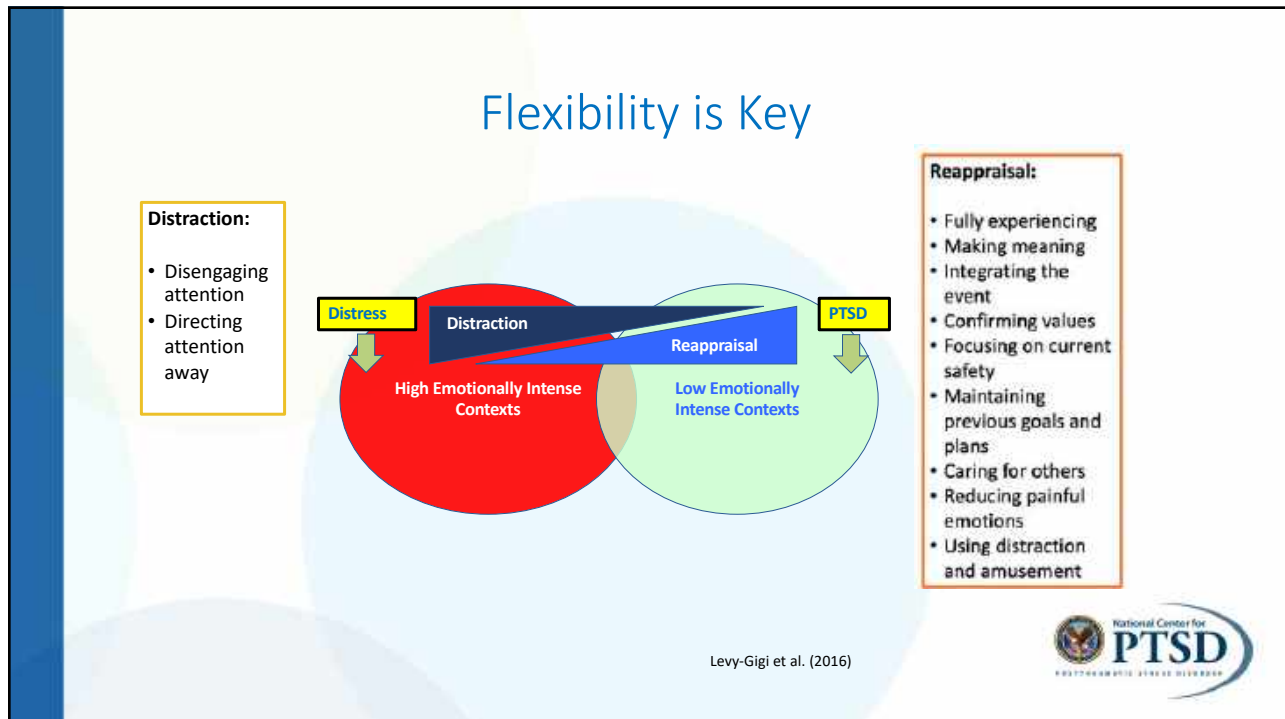
Stress First Aid Model



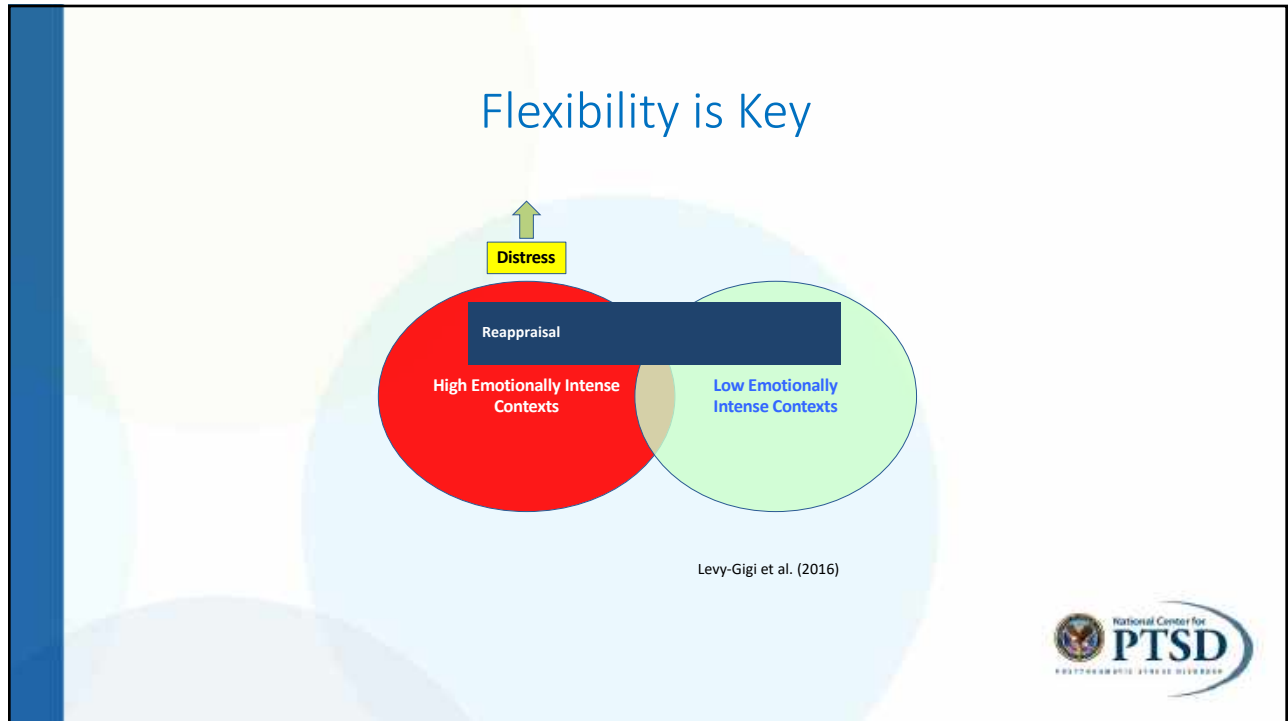
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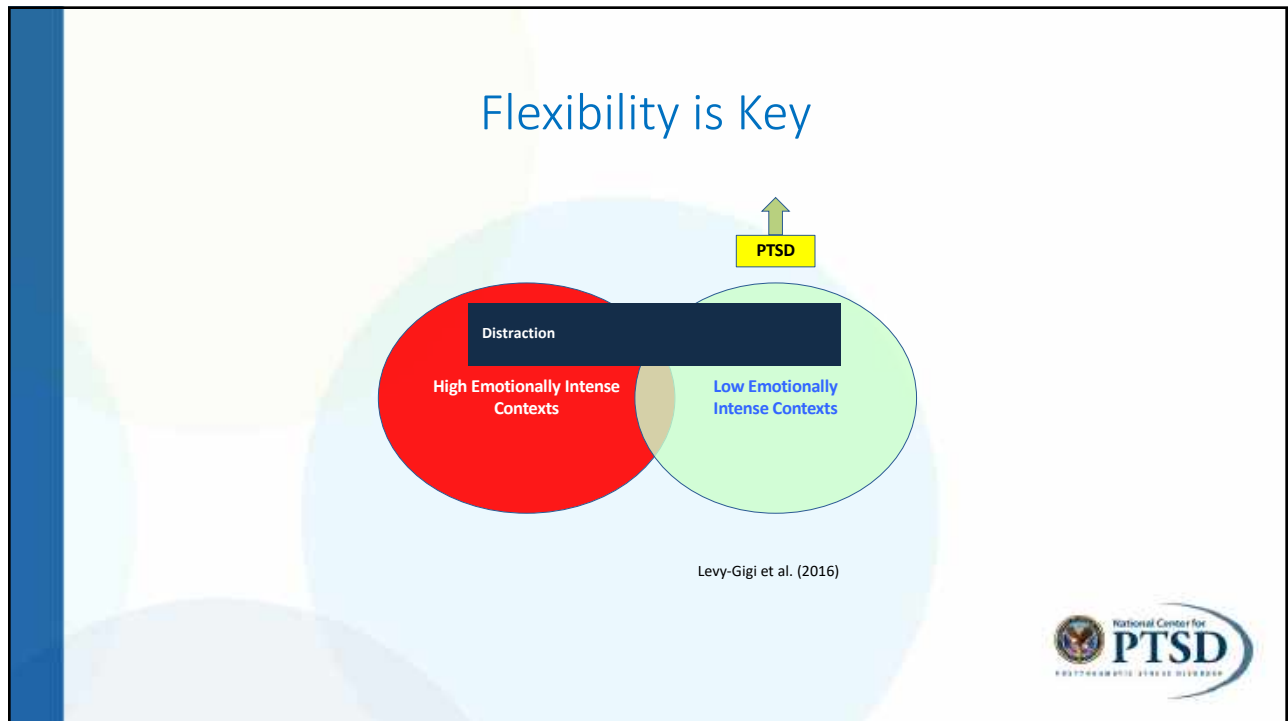
35



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Flexibility is Key

Distress

Distraction

Reappraisal

High Emotionally Intense Contexts

Low Emotionally Intense Contexts

PTSD

Levy-Gigi et al. (2016)

39

Flexibility Mindset Questions to Ask Regularly

- What is happening?*
- What do I need to do?*
- What am I able to do?*
- Is it working?*

THE END OF TRAUMA

HOW THE NEW SCIENCE OF RESILIENCE IS CHANGING HOW WE THINK ABOUT PTSD

GEORGE A. BONANNO

Bonanno, G. *The End of Trauma: How the New Science of Resilience Is Changing How We Think About PTSD*, 2021

40

Peer Support: Why is it Important?



Most who need assistance will depend on other crewmembers to recognize the need and point them toward help

“Self-care requires a bubble of protection of others who value your wellbeing as highly or more than you do.”

Nagoski, E. & A.



Combat Medics on How to Cope With Stress Simon Sinek
2020 Youtube video

41

Empathy



Brene Brown. Empathy.



42

SFA is “Human Being 101”

Good skills in behavior management are the essence of leadership and effective supervision:

- Do employees feel safe?
- Do they want to come to work?
- Do they know what is expected of them?
- Do you calm them down when they are significantly stressed?
- Do you make sure they are connected to others?
- Do they have skills to maintain their competence and self-esteem?
- Do they have a belief in the agency’s mission?
- Can you reconnect them to why they came here in first place?



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Essential SFA skills

Recognize	Act	Know
Recognize when a coworker has a stress injury	Act: If you see something, do or say something <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the distressed person • To a trusted support of the distressed person 	Know at least 2 trusted resources you would access or offer to a coworker in distress



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Key SFA Principle



toe·hold

/ˈtoʊˌhɔld/

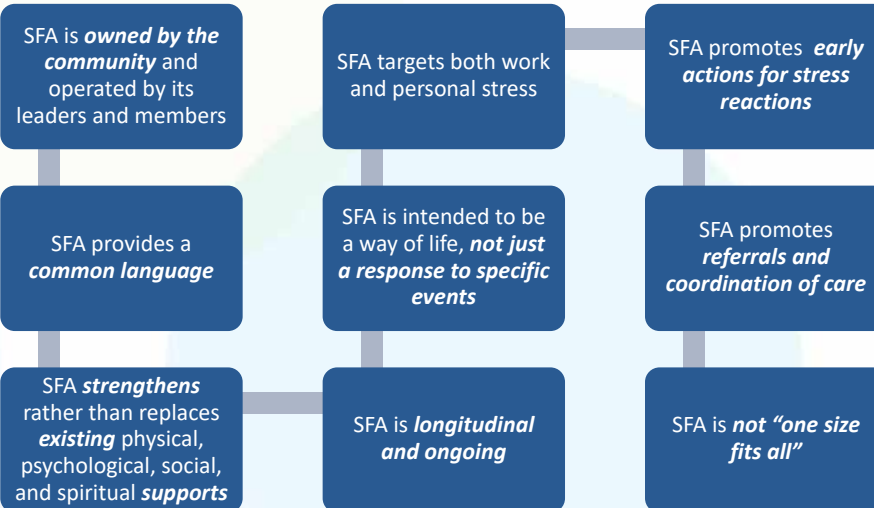
noun

- a small place where a person's foot can be lodged to support them, especially while climbing.
- a relatively insignificant position from which further progress may be made.



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Features of Stress First Aid




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Stress First Aid Actions




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Continuous SFA: Situational Awareness

Check




Coordinate






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Check Actions



Observe	Keep Track	Examine	Decide
Look Listen	Stressors Distress Changes in functioning Response to SFA Actions	One-to-one interactions Collateral information	Dangerousness Stress zone Needs



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Check: Why is it Needed?



- Persons injured by stress may be the last to recognize it
- Stigma: an obstacle to asking for help
- Stress zones change over time
- Needs change over time
- Risks from stress injuries may last a long time



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Potential Stress Indicators


- Fatigue
- Sleep changes or nightmares
- Having a hard time focusing
- Intense feelings
- Feeling unusually numb or uncaring
- Becoming more isolated from others
- Uncharacteristic negative behavior
- Making mistakes
- Compulsive behavior
- Inability to engage in or enjoy things you usually like
- Wanting to avoid situations or reminders



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Check Skill: OSCAR

Observe	State	Clarify	Ask	Respond
<p>Observe: Actively observe behaviors; look for patterns</p>	<p>State observations: State your observations of the behaviors; just the facts without interpretations or judgments</p>	<p>Clarify Role: State why you are concerned about the behavior to validate why you are addressing the issue</p>	<p>Ask why: Try to understand the other person's perception of the behaviors</p>	<p>Respond: Let person respond to your concerns. Discuss options and next steps</p>




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Potential Check Actions: Self-Care



- Give yourself permission to take care of yourself
- Make a conscious effort to keep tabs on yourself
- Become aware of your own personal "red flags" – indicators of orange or red zone stress
- When red flags occur, take steps to mitigate them
- Inform key family, friends, or coworkers about your personal red flags and make a plan as to what to do when they occur



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SFA Self-Analysis Checklist

Check: Self size-up

- What is happening?
- What is needed?
- What is my capacity to deal with this situation?
- What is the best first step?
- What help do I need?
- Is now a good time for a self-check-in?

Coordinate: Resource management

- Do I have or know of resources that may be needed?
- Do I know who to call for help?

Cover: Safety and security

- Am I physically safe?
- Do I "feel" safe?
- Do I feel emotionally safe [insecure, inadequate]?
- Do I feel interpersonally safe [demeaned, disrespected, authority or performance being challenged]?



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SFA Team Analysis Checklist

Check: Crew size-up

- Is the individual/crew prepared to deal with this situation?
- Is the individual/crew ready to go to work [physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually]?
- Do I notice something that tells me that something is off or not right with an individual?
- If I notice something is off or not right, what are my next steps?

Coordinate: Resource management

- Do I have or know of resources that may be needed?
- Do I know who to call for help?
- Do I know how to encourage others to use available resources?

Cover: Safety and security

- Is the crew/individual physically safe?
- Is the individual/crew safe emotionally safe?
- Is the individual/crew safe interpersonally safe?
- Does the individual/crew "feel" safe/ trust that I have their best interest in mind?



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Potential Check Actions: Others



- Offer basic resources like food, water, etc.
- Begin with a casual two-way communication to get someone talking.
- Find the right way to check on someone without annoying them (e.g., email/texting versus calling).
- Check in more than once.
- Be approachable and authentic.
- Monitor / check on staff needs regularly.
- Set ground rules.



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Check Example



- “One of our staff had just returned to work after the death of her son. He had been killed in a car accident caused by driver who was under the influence.
- After responding to a patient with serious injuries due to a driver who was reported to be intoxicated, I told her what a great job she had done and asked her if she wanted to take a quick break with me to grab a snack.”



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Check Example



“I try to get to know each of my staff individually, so I know their baselines and what could potentially be a red flag. Instead of staying in my office, I make a point to sit and talk with them during breaks. That helped when one of my staff members had a pregnant wife, and we responded to a stillborn birth. After that call I took a little extra time to sit and talk with him, to make sure that he was okay.”



60

Check Example



“We had been caring for a pediatric patient for 9 months when she developed an infection and died within a few days. The next day, the nurse who had been caring for her called in sick with a bad cold. I gave her a call just to let her know that I was thinking of her. She said she was sure that her immune system had taken a hit due to the stress of the past several weeks and that she questioned why she continued to do this work. I listened and encouraged her to simply focus on taking care of herself. I reminded her how comforted the child’s family had been by the extraordinary care and compassion she had shown them and their daughter.”



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Check Example



“We decided that with many changes occurring in our organization, we would try to check with all employees about their concerns and brainstorm possible ways to improve conditions in the organization. We had workshops, blogs, and an online platform to gather concerns and troubleshoot ways to implement proposed solutions. We made sure that all employees were given different ways to give input and assigned a team to sort and make sense of that input in a way that respected all employee input.”



62

Check Example



- “Leaders are often afraid to ask how they can help because they don’t want to promise what they can’t provide.
- Ask about what’s needed, and staff’s biggest challenges, but also ask what’s working. Let them know you may not be able to fix everything, but together as a team you can try to creatively mitigate challenges.”



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Check Example



“We put a push button lights on our SFA board in the hallway where to staff walks onto and off the unit. They can hit the button that reflects their stress level, and we can grow the green by acknowledging how stressed they are and how much we care, so we can take action as soon as possible. They are very responsive, and it seems to relieve stress just by pressing the push button light. Simple but effective!”



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Discussion: Check

- What are some ways that someone has checked on you, or ways that you have checked on someone you think is stressed?



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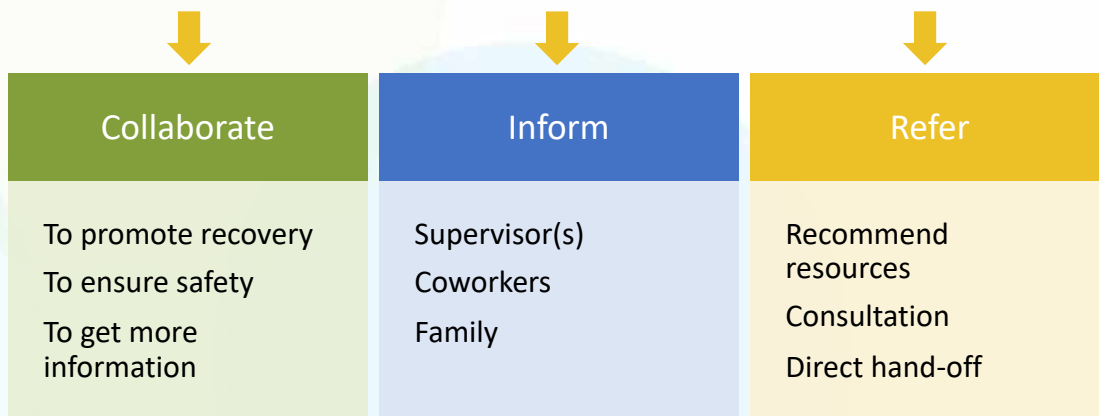
Coordinate

- Collaborate with others who can help, or who need to know.
- SFA is not meant to address all ranges of issues.
- Provide information about resources.



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Coordinate Actions



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Potential Barrier	Coordinate
You have stress injury that impairs your ability to provide SFA	Get help yourself
You cannot acquire or hold the other person's attention or trust	Involve other leaders, coworkers, trained peers, human resources, chaplains, or mental health providers
You have negative beliefs about the person, or the person actively resists attempts to help	
The person does not get better with SFA actions	

Coordinate helps in overcoming potential barriers to providing or succeeding with SFA



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Coordinate: Reasons for Referral

-  Poses a threat to self or others
-  Uncertainty about the strength of the working alliance
-  Uncertainty regarding stress level, dangerousness or level of impairment
-  Worsening over time or failure to improve




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Coordinate Example




“We created a "Wellness Wall" in our staff lounge to assist with communicating resources available to support our staff.”




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Coordinate Example



“Each day an employee will place a colored ball into the bowl. When someone is red, the HR team will huddle up and discuss how the team can assist.”



71

Coordinate Example

“One of our team members reported to work and was unusually quiet and distracted. During her break, I asked if everything was okay.



She explained that her 2-year-old child had just been diagnosed with autism and she just did not know where to begin to get the needed services.

I told her that I knew someone on another shift who had a child with autism and she and her husband had become resource ‘experts’ who had offered to help others. I offered to make an email introduction to her.

At her next shift, she told me how helpful the referral had been.”



72

Coordinate Example



“We had a well-respected nurse who had become more irritable but who wouldn’t open up to anyone. We knew a good friend of hers on another service and let this friend know that we had some concerns. She made more time to do things with the nurse.”



73

Coordinate Example



“I noticed that a newly assigned nurse was much quieter than usual. I checked in with her and she confided in me that it had been her lifelong dream to work with burn survivors, and that she found the work rewarding, but wondered what I did to manage the stress. I invited her to yoga class and to eat with some of the other members of the staff, so she could see how we deal with and talk about our stress.”



74

Discussion: Check and Coordinate

- What are some ways that someone has checked on you, or ways that you have checked on someone you think is stressed?
- What are some of your favorite resources, or strategies you've seen for dealing with the challenges of connecting with resources?



75

Primary Aid: Preserve Life and Prevent Further Harm

Cover



Calm



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Examples of a Need for Cover



- Someone in a life-threatening situation is not thinking clearly or making good decisions because of stress
- Someone has frozen or panicked in an intense situation
- Someone feels guilty because their family has concerns about their safety following the death of a co-worker from an infectious disease
- Someone puts their own physical and mental health in danger from overwork
- Someone has threatened others
- Someone expresses serious thoughts of suicide



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Potential Cover Actions: Self-Care

- Actively seek information
- Get help with personal responsibilities
- Give yourself permission to take care of yourself
- Set boundaries for yourself
- Call on those people, places, or actions that feel safe to you
- When you feel unsafe, distract yourself by focusing on something near you or your own breath or thought (e.g., counting).
- Realize that no one is perfect, and everyone is going to have strengths and vulnerabilities – be aware of your own.




National Center for PTSD
POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

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Cover Actions: Leaders

Combat Medics on How to Cope With Stress Simon Sinek
[2020 Youtube video](#)



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Cover Example: Self-Care



“Having someone you can talk with if you have a bad day is very important. That cover in your personal life is necessary, because so many times we’re still thinking about what happened at work when we get home.”



81



Relationship Advice and Tools from Brené Brown and Tim Ferriss | The Tim Ferriss Show

Cover Example: Mitigate



82

Potential Cover Actions: Others



- Reduce anything that make the person feel unsafe.
- Remind them that they are safe here and now.
- Educate about stress reactions, what to expect, how to feel safer.
- Brainstorm and problem solve solutions with them.
- Communicate with administrative leaders.
- Brief staff about changes in practice / strategies / resources / events.
- Provide an authoritative, accurate voice to limit perceived threat.



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Cover Example: Coworker Support



- “I ask every day, “how did things go today? Anything we need to discuss?” The questions need to be asked, and they can be asked quickly.
- If you're having that open dialogue at every transition period, when something bad does happen, the structure is already in place, and it makes it a lot more feasible for people to communicate comfortably.”



84

Cover Example: Coworker Support



“On the whiteboard, we write our name if we think we are in the green zone that day, to give permission for coworkers to approach us for support without worrying about being a burden. We can erase our name if during the day we are no longer in green.”



85

Cover Example: Coworker Support

“We conduct a prayer at the safety call daily. We remind our staff their colors and its okay not to be okay daily. We are offering spiritual support to staff and families daily. This week spiritual support email was about peoples concern around the planet. Blessing of hands for NICU and offered communion to those who requested. Offered staff support of a child that has passed away NICU/PICU. “



86

Examples of Need for Calm

Never in the history of calming down has anyone ever calmed down by being told to calm down

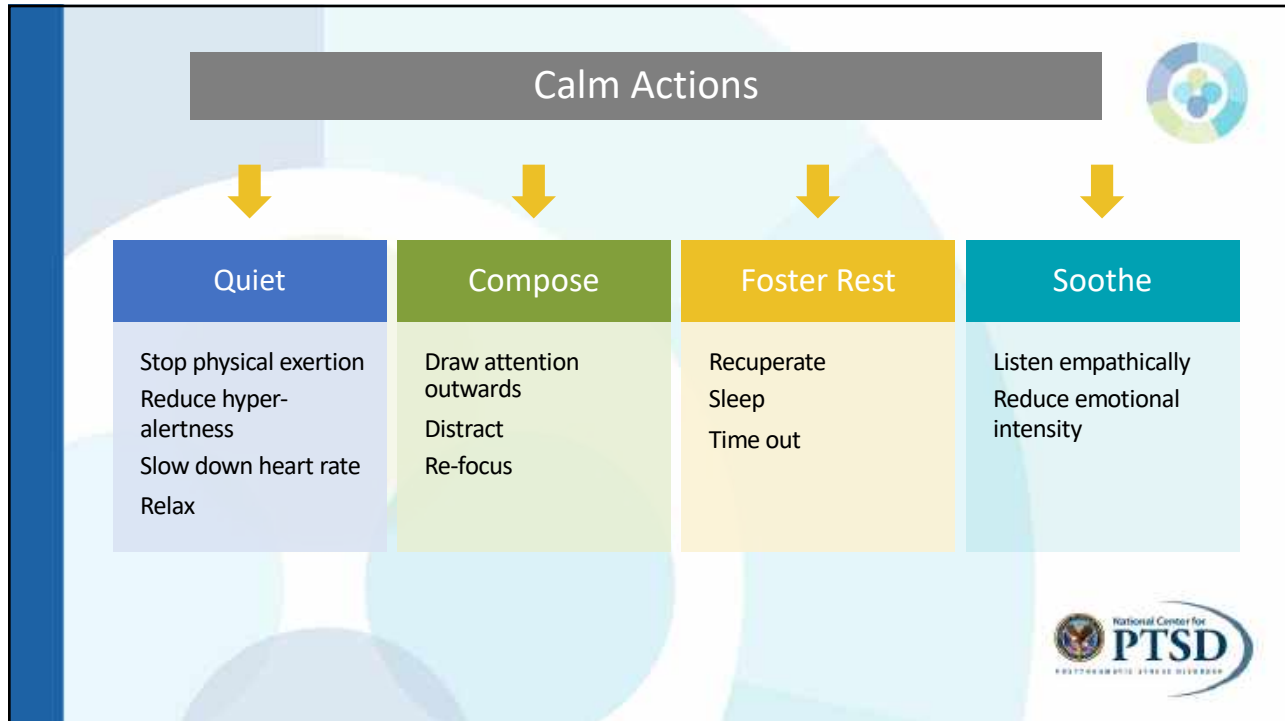
Someone returning from responding to a particularly violent domestic violence case is talking too fast and not reacting appropriately to comments or questions.

Someone is pacing and wringing her hands while on duty. They just heard that their son, an Army Sergeant deployed overseas, has been seriously injured.

Someone punches locker. They have just returned from responding to a baby in a coma after being shaken by a parent.




87



88

[Combat Medics on How to Cope With Stress Simon Sinek; 2020 Youtube video](#)

Calm Actions



89

Emotional Regulation Approaches

Physical:

Cognitive:

Social

Simple, physically based activities that reduce negative sensations


- Exercise
- Breathing
- Yoga

Changing the way one thinks, via:

- Control of attention
- Changing how they view something
- Weighing pros and cons
- Focusing on values, meaning, and/or ethics

Interacting with others results in greater regulation changes via:

- Physiological responses
- Oxytocin
- Active problem-solving
- Self-confidence



90



Kelly McGonigal, TED Talk 2013

Cognitive Calm Actions



91

Potential Calm Self-Care Actions

Prioritize simple calming strategies: **Focus** on:

- Breathing
- Exercise
- Yoga
- Social support
- Reflection, meditation, yoga, prayer
- Whatever helps you to focus on the present moment
- Being realistic - “sometimes/lately” vs. “always/never”
- Reality – plan for stress reactions
- Acceptance
- What you’re grateful for rather than worst-case scenarios
- Changing thoughts or beliefs that don’t serve you
- When/how pain temporarily eases

Example:

Instead of: “Things will never be the same again.”

Try: “Even though things will never be the same, I can grow from what is happening and continue to live in the new life.”



92

Calm Examples: Self-Care



- “What helps calm me is breaking down responsibilities into manageable pieces, making lists and being organized.”



- “Taking a break from work to clear one’s head is beneficial. During this break, several different strategies can be used: a short nap, physical exercise, meditation, stretching, having a conversation with a friend, laughing, getting a drink of water, and avoiding caffeinated beverages that contribute to agitation or anxiety.”



93

Potential Calm Actions for Others

- Maintain a calm presence
- Provide brief instruction in grounding / breathing
- Draw attention outwards when the person is momentarily stressed or overwhelmed
- Foster rest and recuperation
- Listen with understanding
- Validate concerns
- Role model calming actions
- Make meaning and memorialize losses
- Help prioritize and tackle problems



94

Calm Example: Coworker Support



“I spend a little bit of quiet time with the person who needs to get more calm. I’ll redirect them with a question to get their attention distracted from what just happened. I’ll get them to talk about something unrelated, like explaining equipment, or reminding them about what they like to do. Just changing that frame can help, being able to redirect and come back at it from a different perspective. Strategically shifting from one way of looking at things to another can also help.”



95

Calm Example: Coworker Support



“If something is going wrong on a unit, someone will say “Orange huddle!”

That means: “Everyone take breath, we’re coming together.”

It’s not blaming or shaming. It means there’s an issue, we feel it, someone saw it, something is happening, and it’s tense.

It’s a shorthand way to say: “Let’s all take a breath. What do we need to do? This is the shift from hell, but we’ll make it through.””



96

Calm Example: Coworker Support



“After we had a couple of particularly tough shifts, I brought pistachio nuts in for the staff on duty.

Shelling pistachios takes time and makes people slow down, so it gave us a chance to unwind and talk about what happened.


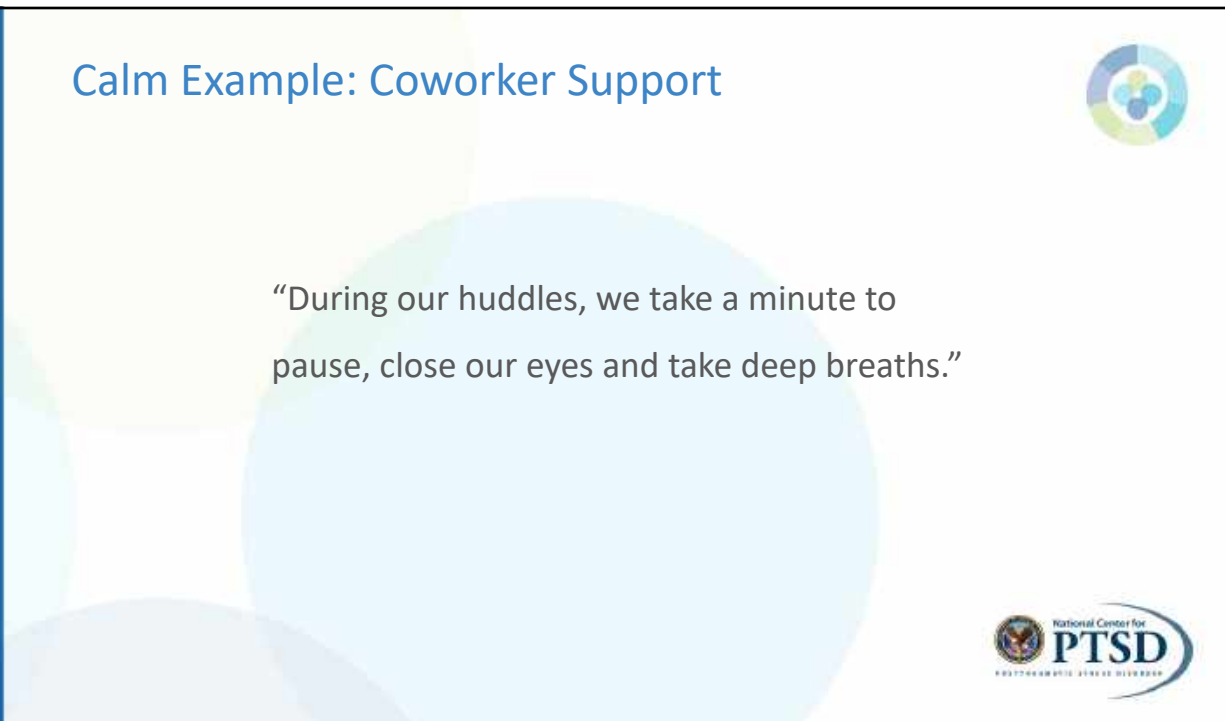
Doing something supportive doesn’t have to look like a mental health intervention.

In fact, the best actions are often the least noticeable ones.”




97

Calm Example: Coworker Support


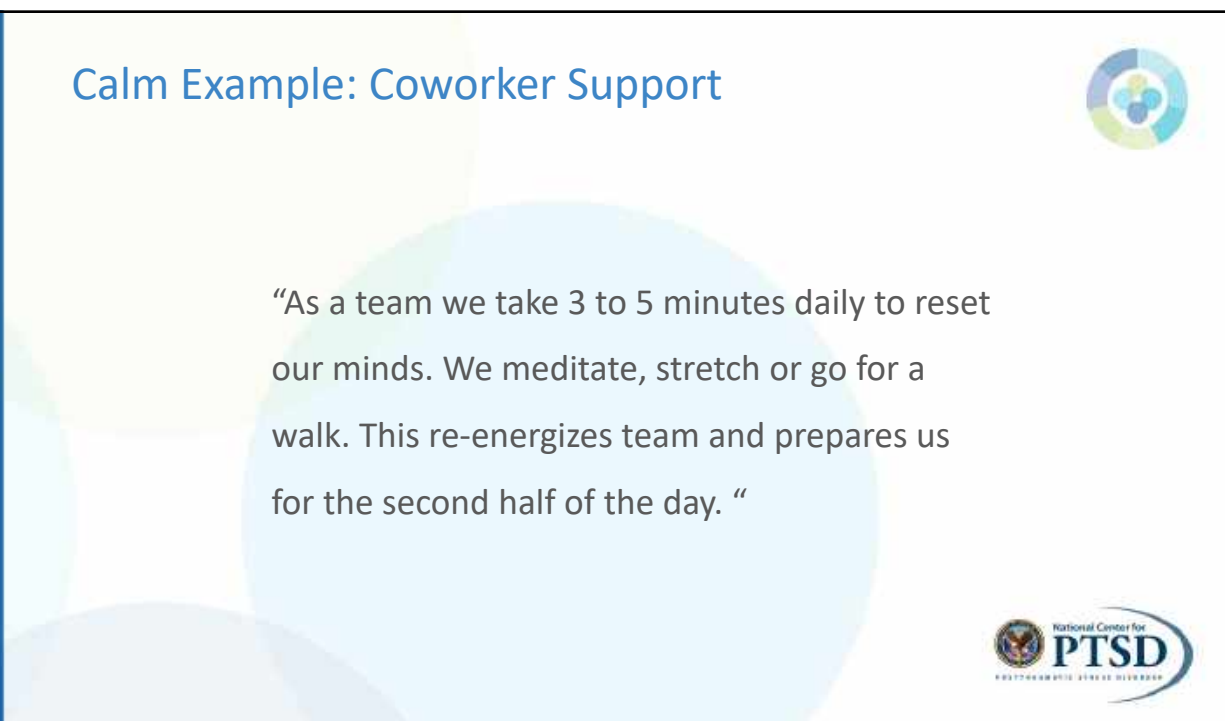


“During our huddles, we take a minute to pause, close our eyes and take deep breaths.”




98

Calm Example: Coworker Support



“As a team we take 3 to 5 minutes daily to reset our minds. We meditate, stretch or go for a walk. This re-energizes team and prepares us for the second half of the day. “



99

Discussion: Cover and Calm

- ▶ What are some examples of ways that you have increased sense of safety or calm for yourself, or that you've given or experienced at work?



100

Secondary Aid: Promote Recovery

Connect

Competence

Confidence



101

Reasons for a Need for Connect

Trust

Stress-related decrements in social skills

Lack of positive feedback or support

Exhaustion

Fear of being misunderstood or being a burden

Avoidance

Orange zone behaviors

Needs for different social support network

Stigma



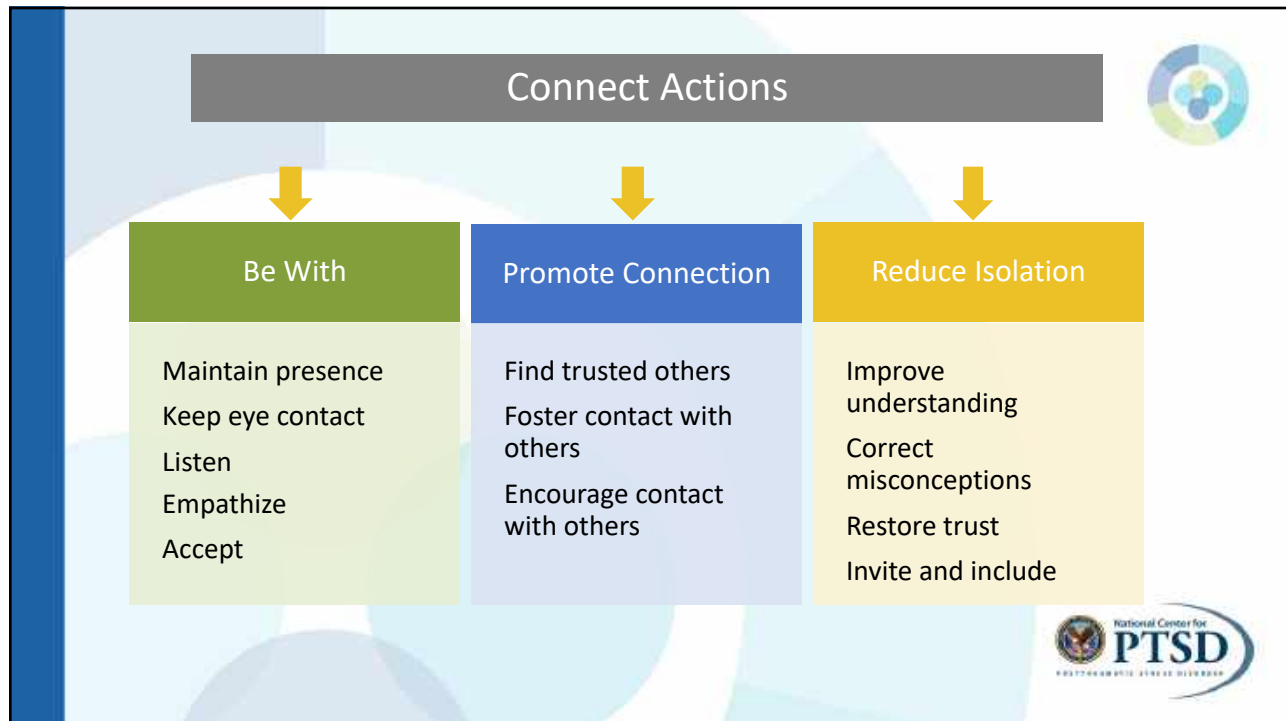
102

Examples of a Need for Connect

- Someone freezes during their first major surgery. Although only disabled for a few seconds, they feel ashamed and withdraws from all contact with fellow employees.
- A child dies after a complicated procedure involving many staff. Some feel that better coordination could have prevented the death. Staff not involved in the situation avoid speaking or interacting with those who were involved. Sense of staff cohesion drops.
- Someone who has been through a difficult year at work and a divorce starts withdrawing from others at work, calling in sick more frequently, and looking disheveled.



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Connect: Different Types of Support



- Instrumental support: assistance with daily tasks
- Informational support: advice or guidance
- Emotional support: empathy, caring, reassurance, opportunities for venting
- Inclusion: pull the person in

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POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

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[Combat Medics on How to Cope With Stress](#) Simon Sinek; 2020 Youtube video

Connect Actions



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Potential Connect Actions: Self-Care



- Appreciate good mentors and friends
- Surround yourself with people who are genuine, authentic, and honest
- Make friends with people you can be yourself with
- Talk about what bothers you
- Spend more time with those who mean the most to you



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Connect Example: Self-Care



“The people I reach out to are honest. It’s about calling a spade a spade, not dancing around it. They’re able to give their perspective on my problem and say something like: ‘You need to pick up the pieces and move on.’ It serves to provide another’s perspective, and foster honesty. Or they might say, ‘That’s not normal for you.’ I am skeptical of self-diagnosis. I think you need to get a second opinion from someone who knows you - a fresh perspective.”



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Potential Connect Actions: Others

- Provide support yourself
- Ask about social support
- Act to remove obstacles to social support
- Offer different types of social support (practical, inclusion, emotional)
- Help link with supportive others
- Address potential negative social influences



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Connect Example: Coworker Support



“There are a lot of opportunities that come about to lend support to the people you work with, whether it's a family member who's sick or somebody who has passed away. There is value in a text message saying, "Hey, I'm thinking about you. I hope that you're doing okay. Things will be better tomorrow." It's really important that we maximize those situations, to foster that sense that someone else is thinking about them when things aren't going well.”



110

Connect Examples: Coworker Support



“I try to make my staff laugh as much as possible throughout the day. I also take advantage of any lulls throughout the day to hold round tables with the staff. During these round tables, staff can voice their concerns over anything that bothers them. I also try to make myself available and approachable to staff at all times during the day.”



“I try to help a co-worker who is drowning by giving a medication to a patient or starting an IV - just a simple task to allow them to catch up.”



111

Connect Example: Coworker Support

“It was a hectic week and I huddled with the team to celebrate a team members birthday Friday and discuss the week and have a little light- hearted conversation which seemed to be energizing for everyone. Also discussed weekend plans outside of work which was very nice, and everyone got a chance to share if they chose to participate.”



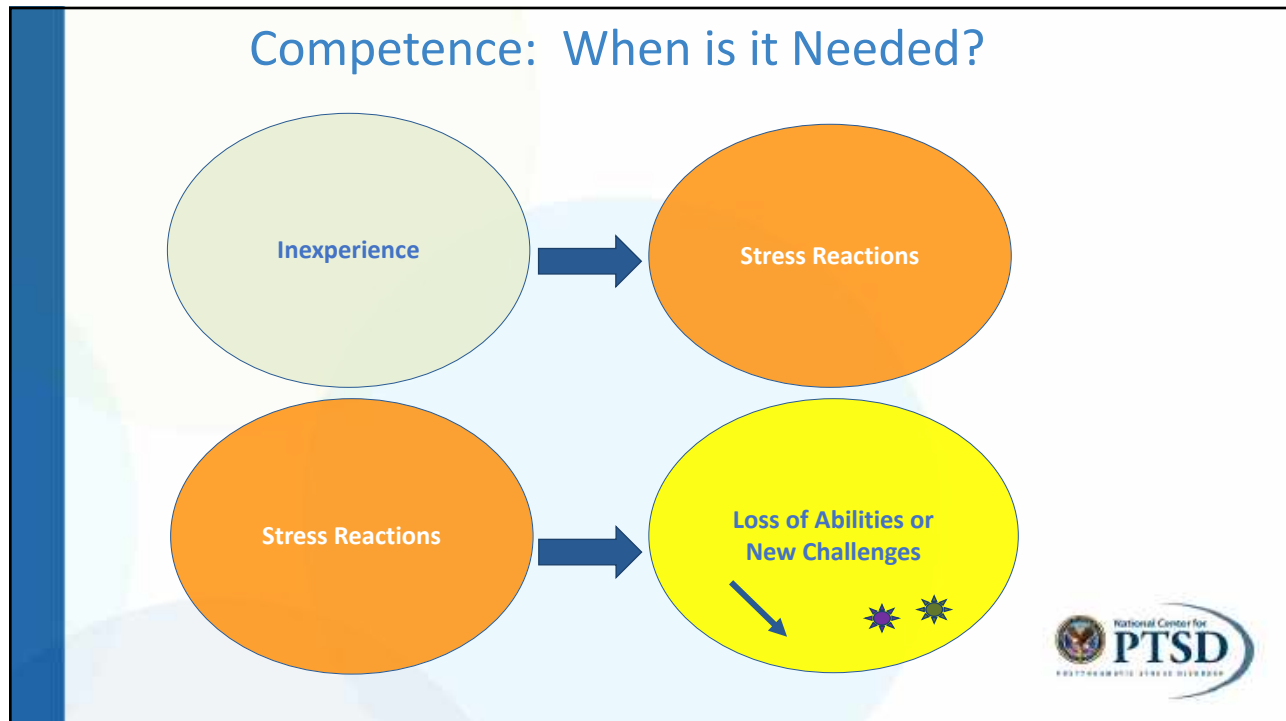
112

Leader Responsibilities

- Make decisions about individual and team capacity
- Set the tone for how others treat themselves and each other
- Mitigate stress and conserve those who become injured by it



113



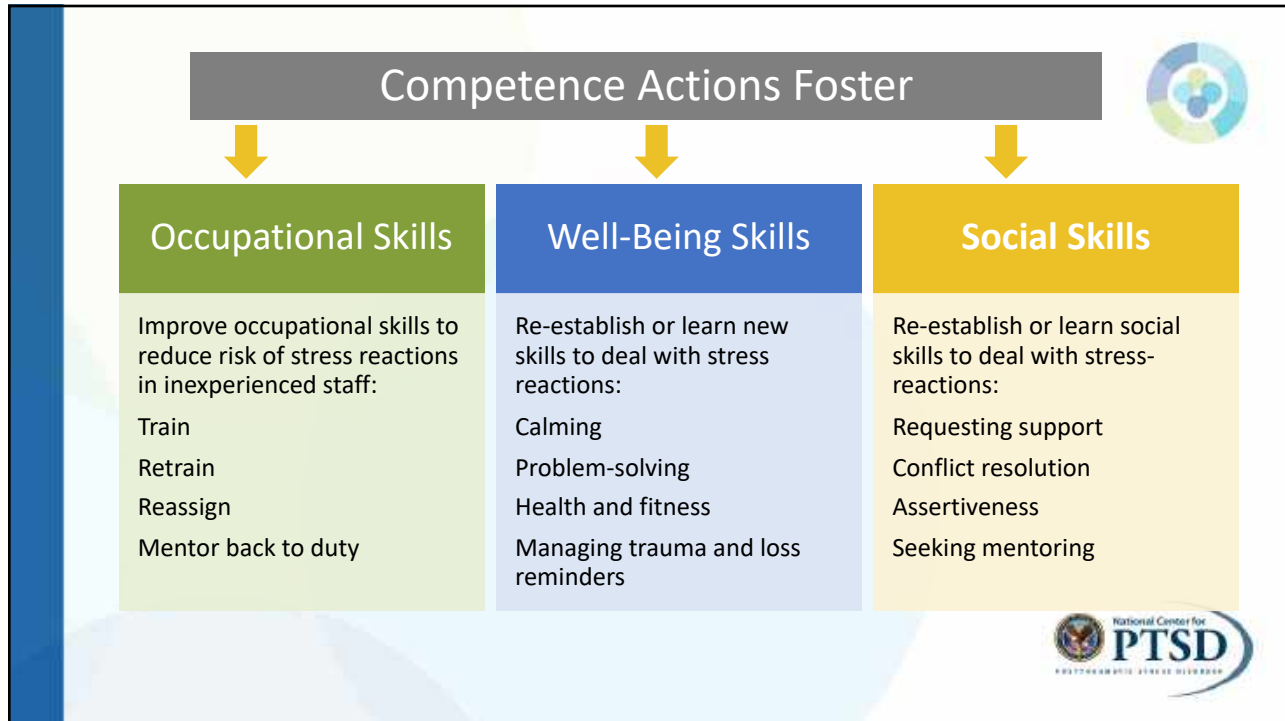
114

Examples of a Need for Competence

- Someone responding to an infectious disease patient becomes anxious because they have never had experience with that type of patient before and have concerns about their own safety.
- Someone who was the target of a violent patient experiences persistent mental confusion and slowed, unclear thinking.
- Someone who developed wear-and-tear stress injury loses the ability to stay calm when dealing with co-workers.
- A manager who loses a staff member who became infected with hepatitis C when they were stabbed by a violent patient becomes increasingly hesitant about sending staff into potentially hazardous situations, increasing the danger to the entire department.


The logo for the National Center for PTSD is located in the bottom right corner of the slide. It features a circular emblem with an eagle, followed by the text 'National Center for PTSD' and 'MULTIHEALTHCARE STRESS DISORDER' below it.

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How Can You Use Competence for Self-Care?



[Combat Medics on How to Cope With Stress Simon Sinek 2020 Youtube video](#)



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Potential Competence Actions: Self-Care



- Use positive self-talk
- Establish new relationships with those who have been through similar situations.
- Do something that is easy for you, to boost sense of accomplishment.
- Simplify ways to be engage with healthy habits.
- Regularly reflect on the balance between the satisfaction of fulfilling work duties and the personal sacrifices you are making.
- Be prepared to adjust behaviors and expectations.



118

Make a Self-Care Plan

Determine what change you want to focus on.

Identify:

- How much you favor self-sacrifice over self-care
- Intrinsic rewards (e.g., need to contribute)
- Extrinsic rewards (e.g., financial)
- Early stress symptoms & what you will do about them
- Potential attitudes and practical obstacles (e.g., outdoor restrictions) and possible solutions

Ask yourself:

- "What is one thing I would like to work on to reduce stress and burnout?"
- "Do I need anyone to help me carry it out?"
- "What triggers can I use to cue me to take the action?"
- "When in my day will I most likely be able to do this?"
- "What resources are needed?"

Review your plan and keep track of how you are doing.

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Potential Competence Actions: Self-Care During Prolonged Stress



Make a commitment to *endure*, using whatever coping skills work best for you, as well as these potential actions:

- Divert attention temporarily (humor, acceptance)
- Keep worrying circumscribed to actual potential risks
- Be disciplined in not letting fears derail important life tasks.
- Shift expectations about what to expect from day to day and about what is considered a “good day”
- Focus on taking steps towards what is most important.
- Create routines of living and try to let that structure organize and guide you



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Competence Example: Self-Care



“Switching specialties was a struggle for me. I utilized all the resources I could and was not afraid to ask my supervisor or other coworkers for help and guidance. I was honest about my lack of confidence in my abilities, and I sought out (and continue to seek help) from other specialists.”



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Competence Example: Self-Care



“When I’m under too much stress, I revert to doing something that is easy for me. It gives me a sense of accomplishment, like tidying the garage, or shoveling snow for a widowed neighbor. It doesn’t take much thought, but it gives me a sense of accomplishment.”



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Potential Competence Actions: Others

- Provide targeted training in work and well-being skills
- Be authentic, normalize stress reactions, and give simple examples of ways to cope
- For less experienced workers, start with basics and provide stepped escalation of stress and responsibility
- Remind the person of strategies and skills that have worked for them before
- Encourage active coping
- Help problem-solve and set achievable goals



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Potential Social Competence Actions



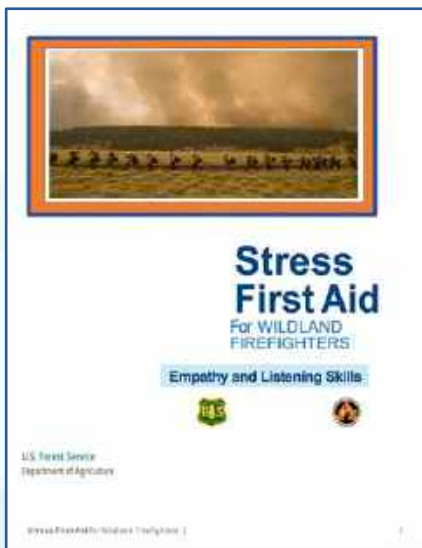
1. . Help make meaning of and integrate what is stressful
 - Validate
 - Understand
 - Uplift
 - Give a different way of viewing things
2. Provide skills or knowledge needed to improve
 - Give guidance, wisdom, expertise
 - Facilitate treatment
3. Reduce isolation and increase social connectedness
 - Shared experience
 - Maintain relationship
 - Accept without stigma
4. Foster emotion regulation
 - Facilitate coping
 - Cue the need for treatment



Social Support for MH Concerns among Veterans with PTSD: A Mixed-Methods Study of Structure, Quality, and Functions. Michele Spoont, PhD. NCPTSD Research Lecture, 2021

124

SFA Empathy and Listening Skills



- I. Supporting Others with Empathy
- II. Dos and Don'ts of Supportive Conversations
- III. Strategies for Engaging in Supportive Conversations
- IV. Levels of Empathy
- V. Fine Tuning Empathic Responding
- VI. Considerations for Supporting Others
- VII. Setting Boundaries
- VIII. Helping Someone in the Aftermath of Loss

125

The Generosity Spectrum


WALLS KEEP EVERYBODY OUT. BOUNDARIES TEACH PEOPLE WHERE THE DOOR IS.
MARK GROVES

Adam Grant, Give and Take. 2014


- **Greedy Takers** see every interaction as an opportunity to advance their own interests. They will run you ragged if you don't protect yourself, but you can get better at spotting takers if you know what clues to look for: they act as if they deserve your help and they don't hesitate to impose on your time.
- **Matchers** trade favors evenly. They can give as good as they get, but they expect reciprocity. Matching is a transactional defensive stance. It adds less value for both you and others, but it can be helpful when you're dealing with a taker.
- **Self-protective givers** are generous, but they know their limits. Instead of saying yes to every help request, they look for high impact, low-cost ways of dealing giving so that they can sustain their generosity and enjoy it along the way.
- **Selfless givers** have high concern for others but low concern for themselves. They have few or no boundaries, which makes them especially vulnerable to takers. By ignoring their own needs, they exhaust themselves and, paradoxically, end up helping others less.

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Setting Boundaries



- Be up-front about how much time and energy you have.
- Let the person know what is okay and not okay.
- Find out if they are asking for advice or empathy.
- Refer them to other resources if you are short on time and/or energy.
- If you are a leader, don't do anything that doesn't benefit your team and work with other teams who can support you when tough things happen.




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Setting Boundaries

- Weed out “takers” by making them do a little work before giving more time to them.
- If someone has shown that they are greedy, pull back and be polite but firm:
 - “I have a lot going on myself at the moment, I’m wondering if there is someone else you ask?”
 - “There are some great [peer supporters / EAP counselors] who have more protected time to talk with you about this than I have right now. I can help you get connected with them.”
 - “This is no longer a good use of my time, and I’m not going to do it for you anymore.”
- When you are stressed, tell others so they can prepare, understand, or help.




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Competence Example: Coworker Support



“If someone is second-guessing how they did something, I will share how I've done something similar. I think when we can share our experience, how it affected us, and how we dealt with something, it probably helps the person to understand, “all right, I'm going to be okay.” It's not permanent and it's a normalizing thing, and it's part of the process.”



129

Competence Example: Coworker Support

“We took a moment at our weekly staff meeting to speak about the SFA concepts that we used throughout the year.”



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Examples of a Need for Confidence

- Someone whose failure to take proper precautions contributes to the death of a patient. They feel extremely guilty and become self-destructive.
- Someone who develops wear-and-tear stress reaction loses respect for leaders and becomes angry and irritable.
- Someone who is regularly exposed to significant life threat suffers lowered functioning, loses spiritual faith, and becomes depressed.




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Potential Confidence Actions: Self-Care

- Use small triumphs to build confidence
- If you have self-doubt, read more self-help books or articles
- Don't push yourself to "process" a situation in any particular time frame, but if something triggers you, give yourself time and space to integrate it
- Use the wisdom gained from hard experiences to reconfirm your values, make changes in your life, appreciate what you value, or help others
- Use positive self-talk
- Focus on ways that you've made a difference
- Adopt a long-term perspective



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Confidence Example: Self-Care



“Sometimes you have to do some self-talk, because there’s only so much you can do and you’re not going to change someone trying to blame things on you, so you have to be comfortable in saying, ‘I know that I did everything that I could.’ No matter how somebody else sees it, I have to get to the point where I’m okay with others thinking that I didn’t do my job. I know I did my job.”



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How Can You Help Coworkers Rebuild Confidence?



[Combat Medics on How to Cope With Stress Simon Sinek 2020 Youtube video](#)



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Potential Coworker Confidence Actions

- Be authentic, empathic, and nonjudgmental.
- Help them counter their guilt by normalizing their reactions and letting them know they are not alone in experiencing stress reactions.
- Help them focus on the present.
- Encourage them to remember their personal strengths, positive relationships, spiritual change, appreciation for life, or other things they value.
- Help them make meaning of difficult events or losses by encouraging them to find ways to memorialize or honor those events or losses.
- Be willing to talk with them as many times as they need, give them relevant reading materials, and connect them to treatment or to people who have dealt with similar situations.



136

Ideas for Fostering Meaning / Gratitude

For yourself

- 3 good things
- “What went well today?”
- Gratitude journal
- One thing I love about this patient
- Saying thank you
- One grateful email or letter per week
- Group email w/friends or colleagues - things you are grateful for

On the unit

- Appreciative check in to start a meeting:
 - “Does anyone have a story of something that went well this week?”
- Appreciative gossip
- Positive Fridays
- Collective gratitude journal
- Huddle “shout out”
- Appreciation Board in Unit
- M&M: Rescue step, positive pause, focus one M&M per month on success story
- Good Catch: Fishbowl, emails, w/coffee cards
- Environmental prompts
- Wall of fame—post pictures and letters when former patients return
- Group emails: every day, or three days a week: 3-5 things they are grateful for
- Strengths-comment on strengths of family/patient daily



137

Potential Leader Confidence Actions: Laying a Foundation

- Set realistic expectations
- Confront stigma about stress reactions
- Be a role model to show coworkers how to get through difficult situations.
- Remind people of the ideals and values that drew each of you to the work you are doing.
- Give regular positive feedback, and remind them about their positive impact, values, skills and competence.
- Foster and support taking steps to alleviate and mitigate the harmful effects of stress.



138

Potential Leader Confidence Actions: Responding to Stress Reactions

- Allow the person to be reassigned or take a break from work.
- Be patient and open to the possibility that the person can fully return to work duties.
- Gradually increase duties and responsibilities when the person returns to work.
- Look for positive changes in the person's behavior.
- Mentor the person to consider other options if they continue to struggle, including leaving their current position.



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Confidence Example: Coworker Support



“There was a time where I dropped the ball. It was not earth-shattering, but it was significant. I was completely unable to connect the dots at all until one day my supervisor talked to me and said, ‘During that same time period, your mom had been terminally ill and then passed away.’ As obvious as it should have been, I was not able to see the connection until he said that to me.”



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Confidence Example: Coworker Support

“This week we reviewed strategies for "Finding the Silver Lining" for when things do not go your way. The staff took time to pause to list items that make them feel safe, energized and happy. For example: going for a walk around campus to observe the flower and tree landscaping.”



141

Discussion: Connect, Competence, and Confidence

What are some examples of ways that you have been able to increase connection, competence, and confidence for yourself, or that you've given or experienced at work?



142

Questions & Comments

- A. Continuous Aid
 - Check
 - Coordinate
- B. Provide Primary Aid
 - Cover
 - Calm
- C. Provide Secondary Aid
 - Connect
 - Competence
 - Confidence



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Major Concepts: Review Q&A

Stress Continuum

Ready	Reacting	Injured	ILL
Ready to help others	Responding to demands	Feeling the drain	Need Help
SOURCES Balanced life activity Meaning and purpose	SOURCES Any Stressor	SOURCES • Wear and Tear • Inner Conflict • Life Threat • Loss	SOURCES Clinical mental disorders (depression, anxiety, substance abuse, PTSD)
BEHAVIORS In control Calm and steady Getting the job done Motivated Maintaining humor Sleeping enough Ethical and moral behavior	BEHAVIORS Increased energy / HR Change in focus ↑ ↓ Alert for threats Changes in mood (worry, amot, irritable, angry) Physical changes (poor sleep, aches and pains) Social changes (isolation, hyperactive, loud, numb)	BEHAVIORS Loss of control of mood, social, or physical reactions (panic, rage, guilt, shame, social numbing or isolation, peer abuse, moral compass affected) No longer feeling like normal self	BEHAVIORS Symptoms persist and worsen > 30 days Severe distress Social or occupational impairment

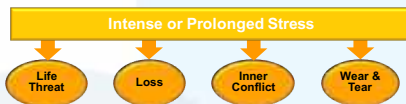
Stress First-Aid



Seven Cs of Stress First Aid:

- Check**
Assess, observe and listen
Get help, refer as needed
- Coordinate**
Get to safety ASAP
- Cover**
Relax, Slow down, refocus
- Calm**
Get support from others
- Connect**
Restore effectiveness
- Competence**
Restore self-esteem and hope
- Confidence**
Restore self-esteem and hope

Stress Injury



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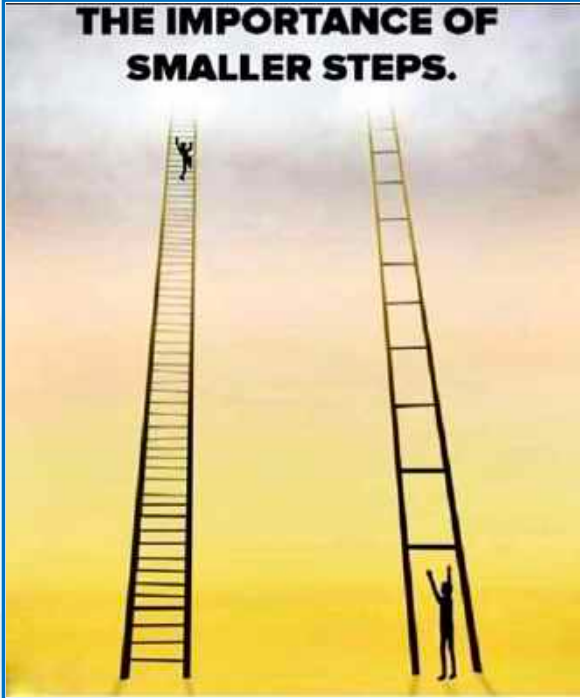
Characteristics of Stress First Aid

- Flexibility
- “Tiny steps”
- “Toehold”
- Timing and context are important
- Mentoring and problem solving
- Bridging to higher care




145

THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALLER STEPS.




The image shows two ladders against a sunset sky. The ladder on the left is tall and thin, with a person near the top. The ladder on the right is shorter and wider, with a person at the base. The text 'THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALLER STEPS.' is at the top.




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We cannot force someone to hear a message they are not ready to receive, but we must never underestimate the power of planting a seed.



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Stress First Aid Effect on Organizations: Example



“SFA creates an improved ability to identify issues, come together, and problem solve solutions.

It calls attention to systems level issues that are problematic for the workforce.

Rather than managers worrying that if they ask what’s going wrong, they will have to fix it, it’s more about having a dialogue.



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Stress First Aid Effect on Organizations: Example



“Staff can report that there are activities or issues that are putting them into the orange.

Then those issues can float up and be discussed:

- A department is in orange because...
- The hospital is in orange because...

It’s not the old model of sucking it up, taking two breaths, and going back to work.

It’s a model of identifying and addressing issues as a team.”



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Voices From the Field

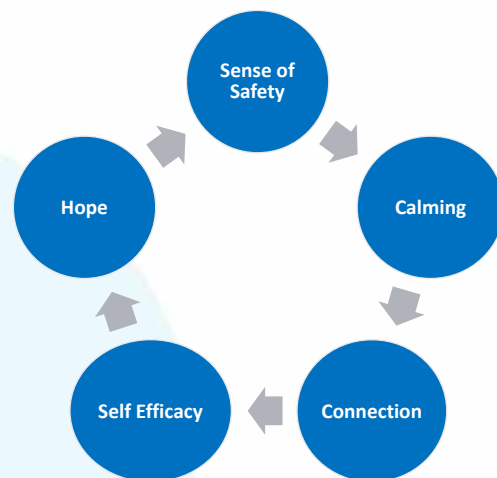
“One thing I'm really excited about is that Stress First Aid helps supervisors and leaders to see what their long-term role can be when an employee's work is being negatively impacted by stress. Instead of saying "I hope they get things worked out," and feeling like it is not something that they should meddle in, I hope that they will be able to see opportunities to check and coordinate, to establish plans to build competence, to mentor back to confidence. This will really compliment some of the immediate crisis response tools that the agency is already familiar with.”



150

Voices From the Field

“Group meetings using SFA at a unit or team level are highly effective due to the focus on the 5 elements. SFA is a great blueprint that creates opportunities for problem solving.”



Hobfoll, et al. 2007.

151

Voices From the Field

“As I have become more grounded in the principles of Stress First Aid, I find myself thinking in SFA terms. It has, in essence become my default starting place whenever I am faced with how best to provide support to a co-worker.”



152

Implementation Strategies



154

Get Buy-In From Unit/Department Leadership

Talking points:

- SFA is a way to improve how you're already working – not adding a new burden or replacing anything
- Goals are to create opportunities for people to access resources that already exist.
- SFA can improve enhance natural skills and processes that are already in place
- SFA requires engagement by peers and leaders – it is not a solo activity! It is designed to improve how we work together and support each other, top to bottom and side to side.



155

Peer Support Champion Characteristics

1. Introduce SFA to start a dialog
2. Introduction Training for Leaders and Champions on select units
 - Consider an expanded peer support champion training with more dialog around each action
3. Introduction for HR and EAP personnel
4. Provide Awareness Brief (20 min) training for all staff on the implementation units

TRAINER

Teach and engage HCWs in your organization

SUPPORTER

Foster trust and encourage reaching out

CONNECTOR

Connect trainees to each other and resources and foster leadership involvement

LEADER

Acts to enhance team welfare




156

Share with a peer your thoughts about SFA

What was could ways could we grow the green

Participate in additional SFA training or team activities



157

Building Awareness


- Signage posted
- Brief SFA video distributed
- Training begins

Proactive Integration Into Workflows (Grow the Green)

- Daily stress continuum color discussion
- Daily pause
- Weekly stress buster
- Many more... Have fun

“Just In Time” Response (Stop the Burn)

- Peer support and connection to other support resources are ongoing & can be linked to through Unit Lead
- SFA huddles and coaching sessions as needed



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Grow the Green Examples

- ✓ Play with the SFA concepts
- ✓ Flyers in work rooms, restrooms, etc.
- ✓ Appreciative gossip
- ✓ Thankful Thursday
- ✓ Orange Huddles
- ✓ Quick Check tool
- ✓ Emphasize common language of SFA
- ✓ Breathing exercises & reminders
- ✓ Team communication ideas
- ✓ Lunch & Learns
- ✓ Monthly or bi-monthly SFA leader/peer rep Zoom-in sessions to share ideas, brainstorm
- ✓ Share 1-page handouts on SFA/Wellbeing web site
- ✓ Leader Training



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Keep the discussion going



- Regularly add tips or actions that support green zone functioning to staff meetings.
- Determine stress levels with questions such as:
 - “What does a green shift look or feel like here?”
 - “How about a yellow shift, or an orange shift?”
- Look for opportunities to embed a brief (2-5 minute) SFA action into unit meeting or activity
- Give SFA-related information in ongoing newsletters or other routine communications



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Conduct 20-30-minute booster sessions virtually or in person



- Use workbook to guide content of booster sessions
- Review SFA core actions
- Discuss continuous SFA actions of Check and Coordinate
- Practice scenarios or discuss SFA in the context of current work experiences
- Review and next steps



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Group Discussion



- What need is SFA fulfilling for you at this point?
- What are some of the easiest ways to start?
- What are the first steps you could take?
- Who can help you in your organization?
- What obstacles do you anticipate?
- What can help with the obstacles?
- What resources do you need?



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Resources

Stress First Aid Implementation Guide for INSTRUCTORS

Stress First Aid Group Engagement Strategies

Stress First Aid for HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Person-Centered Stress First Aid for Patients, Caregivers, and Customers Manual

Stress First Aid for HEALTHCARE WORKERS

PTSD National Center for PTSD

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Resources: Specific Applications

Stress First Aid Application: Leading Actions

Stress First Aid Application: Empathy and Listening Skills

PTSD National Center for PTSD

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Voices From the Field

“A member of our unit felt overly responsible for the death of a patient. She was a solitary person before the incident, so it would be natural for her reaction to be one of retreat. A year ago, I would have let her retreat, but because I was introduced to SFA, I rallied an effort to help by creating collaborative opportunities with peers that allowed us to informally check with her.”



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Voices From the Field

“So much of peer support is about providing accurate information. It sounds so simple and easy. But often with unfolding situations, politics and egos, obtaining and providing accurate information takes finesse. If we can build in some sense of predictability, we can start to build trust. Only then can we begin to understand what is needed and match what we do with the needs.”



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Voices From the Field

“In the current climate of challenge, it is easy to sink into cynicism and lose sight of why we signed on in the first place. After learning about Stress First Aid, I now take an active role in trying to move negative, circular conversations into something more productive.”



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Voices From the Field

“It is the human condition to want to feel in control. For many of us, there is nothing worse than feeling out of control. SFA has taught me to allow the person to speak her mind and to be an active participant in creating a path forward. It takes time, patience and skill.”



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Voices From the Field

“The 5 elements that form the basis of SFA have provided a roadmap for me as a leader when our agency is navigating difficult times. I ask what action I need to take to promote a sense of safety and calm. How can I enhance a sense of connection rather than isolation? What conversations need to take place to bolster up a sense of competence and hope?”



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Voices From the Field

“SFA has taught me that it is okay to acknowledge that our job is tough and that we need to be tough. But beyond tough, we need to build strength through skills that help us build our sense of competence and belief in our mission. Being tough and building strength are both important. That is how we build resilience. Each of us needs to be strong, but we are stronger together.”



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Voices From the Field

“SFA is sometimes hard work. It requires listening with my head and my heart. So much of SFA is simply allowing a person to give voice to their doubts and concerns without trying to “fix it”. So often we are tempted to placate a person who is agonizing over a perceived misstep by quickly jumping in to tell them that they did a good job or what to do to feel better. I have learned that all that does is short circuit the conversation. It takes courage to bear witness to another’s pain and suffering and help them find their way to a new place.”

