

Toolkit 2

Pre intervention

Learning Unit 10

Self-support. Asking for help, do not act alone

2 - Stress management

2. Do you provide your team with psychoeducational education on stress management?



If you answered “No”: please read the following list of recommendations

Activity 2



Activity 2

Individual stress management

Note: You can train your team members to deactivate fight-or-flight response of the body. Provide them with some techniques to improve the pre phase time of the critical incident.

Activity 2

Individual stress management

Relaxation can be achieved through many types of meditation:

- Tai chi,
- Yoga and
- technique of progressive relaxation
- Biofeedback training

More stress management techniques include

- Journal writing
- Aerobic fitness
- Muscle strength training
- Maintaining proper nutrition

Social networking is an important protective factor:

- Talking to close friends or colleagues
- Receiving feedback as a form of emotional release
- Social support can help the process of contextualising a traumatic experience so that it no longer exists or exerts an excessively powerful influence on one's life.

Individual Approaches for Stress Prevention and Management

Manage your workload:

- Set task priority levels with realistic work plans.
- Recognise that “not having enough to do” or “waiting” is an expected part of any disaster response.
- Balance your lifestyle:
 - Eat nutritious food
 - Stay hydrated
 - Avoid excessive caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco
 - Get adequate sleep and rest, especially on longer assignments
 - Get physical exercise
 - Maintain contact and connection with primary social support

Use stress reduction strategies:

- Reduce physical tension by using familiar personal strategies (e.g. take deep breaths, do some gentle stretching, meditate, wash your face and hands, and practice progressive relaxation)
- Pace yourself between low- and high-stress activities



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- Use time off to decompress and “recharge your batteries” (e.g. have a good meal, watch TV, exercise, read a novel, listen to music, take a bath or talk to family)
- Talk about emotions and reactions with co-workers during appropriate times

Maintain self-awareness:

- Recognise and heed early warning signs for stress reactions
- Accept that one may not be able to self-assess problematic stress reactions
- Recognise that over-identification with or feeling overwhelmed by victims’ and families’ grief and trauma may signal a need for support and consultation
- Understand the differences between professional helping relationships and friendships to help maintain appropriate roles and boundaries
- Examine personal prejudices and cultural stereotypes
- Recognize when one’s own experience with trauma or one’s personal history interferes with effectiveness
- Be aware of personal vulnerabilities and emotional reactions, and the importance of team and supervisor support

In addition to focusing on the stress of the rescuers, it is also important to consider the respective families!

These strategies will help reduce stress for family members:

- Provide family members with as much information as possible about the disaster and distribution.
- As a second possible strategy, assign a specific link from your organisation to family members.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). Human Resources for Crisis Communication. [cdc.gov. https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/ppt/cerc_2014edition_Copy.pdf](https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/ppt/cerc_2014edition_Copy.pdf)



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