

LEADERS HELPING THE HELPERS

In your role as supervisor or manager you know how to support your staff during normal times. But these are not normal times; the risks have changed, and you are aware that this can impact on you and your staff. You may be feeling like you are forging new ground. You may now be required to stay in much closer touch with your staff to keep them updated on changes, or to ensure they are not struggling with the additional pressures or stresses and are able to do their vital work with residents, clients, or patients. Here are some considerations for supporting staff:



Regular check-ins with your team are critical. Connecting with workers may help to normalize the many reactions workers may be displaying in this abnormal situation. De-briefing with staff who lose a resident, client, or patient, or face difficult situations becomes more important in times of higher stress. If they've experienced several high stress situations in a short period of time this becomes even more critical.

It can be helpful to start a difficult conversation by acknowledging everything workers bring to their job. Share what you've always appreciated about their contributions, and how difficult it must be in the new circumstances. If you sense that one of your workers is feeling the stresses more acutely or you just think something isn't right, it may be time to connect with that worker in a different way. For more ideas on how to help troubled co-workers, visit this webpage from [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#).



Ask what they may need, don't make assumptions. If you initiate a conversation and there is reciprocation of openness about struggles, you may wish to share that these are very stressful times and you want to better understand to support in any way you can. Express your concern in a caring way by describing what you have noticed that has changed in them, and your desire to help them stay healthy and well as they do their difficult work.

Provide access to resources and offer more flexibility where possible. Your workers are not only dealing with changes and potential risks at work, but also in their personal lives. They may have children who are not at school, or spouses who work from home, or elderly parents they are worried about. Provide as much support as possible to ease their challenges. Consider directing staff to the workshop [Enhancing Psychological Health, Wellness, and Resilience](#), which is free during COVID-19 and addresses stress, burnout, compassion fatigue, trauma, and moral distress. Visit SafeCare BC's [Learning Space](#) for access.



Workers may need more frequent breaks and communication to reduce their stress levels. For ideas on effective break activities to improve mental health, review this webpage by [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#) and consider signing up for their weekly Take Your Break emails. Regularly communicate about changes and consider providing more time for employees to absorb those changes. You may wish to confirm communication in writing. Regular check-ins with individuals may be critical to monitor their well-being and to support them to do stress busting activities during their workday.

Ensure you are taking care of your needs. Reach out to your leader or a colleague if you need support. These are trying times and we all need to be aware when we are struggling and do something to reduce our stresses so we can stay safe and healthy.



References:

<https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/newsletter/healthy-break-activities>

<https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/employee-resources/helping-troubled-co-workers>

<https://safecarebclearningspace.ca/>