

FOR SUPERVISORS, MANAGERS & UNION LEADERS: DEALING WITH EMPLOYEE REACTIONS TO VIOLENCE

What can I expect from people?

While people are grieving the loss of coworkers and friends, it is important to be particularly sensitive, thoughtful and considerate in our actions and reactions to people's behavior. There is likely to be a wide range of reactions – from no noticeable reaction, to significant, extended changes in behavior. For some people, the current stresses will bring out the “best” in them – helpfulness, understanding, supportive behavior, clear thinking and responsible action. Others' behavior may be much more challenging for you, and for them – anger, frustration, irritability, moodiness, fear and anxiety. It is important to promote a sense of calmness. Try to be flexible and practical. Taking time to deal with people in a compassionate and understanding way may be the best way to help people to cope and re-focus on their work.

What if someone starts crying?

- Approach the person gently and supportively.
- Take time to talk with the person – listen to what the person is saying and demonstrate your understanding and concern by showing the person that you've heard him or her (repeat back, in the same or slightly changed words, what the person said to you.)
- Allow the person to take a break if possible. Help the person with appropriate requests and needs or, if you cannot, try to find someone who can.

What do I do with hostile, angry reactions?

- Stay calm, take a few deep breaths and remind yourself that everyone is operating under some special pressures.
- Try to acknowledge the person's concern, for example say “you're really upset that you didn't have this information earlier.”
- Listen to their feelings. Just listening without judgment can help defuse the anger. Sometimes letting someone “vent” takes care of the intense feeling.
- A break may be helpful to the person. Say “would you like to take a break and then we can work this out?”
- Pace yourself, take it one step at a time. Once the intense emotion is relieved, move the discussion to problem solving “What do you think we should do now?” Problem solve together to develop a reasonable course of action.

How can I take care of myself?

- Find a trusted person at work that you can talk with for support and to answer your questions.
- Stay focused on your goal, which is to help and support your people over the long haul.
- Take breaks and trust others to help you to get the job done.
- Be honest with yourself and others – it can be a great relief when someone says, “I don't know” or “This is scary.”
- Take good care of yourself and find helpful positive ways to manage your own stress! Working with stressed people is very demanding and difficult. Contact the EAP for support.

The free, confidential, professional Employee Assistance Program is available to employees and their immediate family members

1-800-EAP-4-YOU
TTY: 1-877-492-7341
www.eap4you.com