



OCDE CRISIS RESPONSE NETWORK

How Co-Workers Can Be Supportive

What can you do when a co-worker is affected by a critical incident?

You may have your own feelings about the incident that are difficult to resolve.

Most of all, you may simply feel that you don't know what to say.

The tips below may help you to be caring and supportive.

- Survivors need to come to their own conclusions about why the event occurred. This will help them regain feelings of safety and security. It is not helpful for others to impose upon the survivor their explanation of why the event occurred.
- Don't make a schedule by which a person "should" recover.
- Each person experiences trauma and its consequences differently. One person cannot know how another feels. If you want to share your feelings, communicate clearly that this is how you feel.
- Feel free to ask how someone is doing, but don't ask about details of the event. If you do ask, be prepared to listen.
- Acknowledge the event. Pretending that nothing happened may seem like the easiest thing to do, but it won't help affected individuals recover.
- Listen. Asking detailed questions can come across as intrusive. If your co-worker wants to talk, just listen. Talking about the event is often an important part of healing. But if he or she is not ready to talk about it, don't push.
- Offer long term emotional support. It takes longer to recover from a critical incident than most people realize. For instance, a year might seem like enough time to "get over it," yet the first anniversary is often difficult.
- Offer practical support. Instead of the catch all, "if there's anything I can do..." offer to do specific things such as give rides to and from work, run errands, pick up part of their workload (check with supervisor first), and/or other favors.
- Changes in behavior and emotions are normal. However, if a job performance is disrupted, you may want to suggest that the person contact Employee Assistance Programs/Services.