

Managing a Team During a Crisis

The days and weeks following a workplace crisis, a local or national trauma, or any event that threatens employees' sense of safety, is a difficult time for managers. People may have a wide range of reactions that require your response in a timely and professional manner. Managers are not expected to function as counselors, but it is important for every supervisor and manager to be aware of potential reactions, and have a clear sense of how to respond.

What reactions/symptoms might employees exhibit during a crisis?

- Fear
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- More talking to each other at work
- Generalized fatigue or apathy
- Anger
- Sleep problems
- Physical complaints
- Anxiety and nervousness
- Suspiciousness

Employees do not necessarily show all (or any) of these symptoms. All of these reactions are *normal* responses to an *abnormal* event. Depending on personal life experiences, some people may report or show more vulnerability than others.

Be prepared to respond and intervene:

- Listen and be supportive
- Build a sense of control at work. What can employees control within the workplace to help them feel a little safer?
- Pass out tip sheets provided by the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Understand that people's reactions are normal. Communicate that it is "okay" to experience these reactions in the face of these events.
- Allow employees to talk about the events, but be prepared to set limits on how often this is done. Keeping a normal routine is important.
- Allow employees to check in by phone with family members.
- Circulate among the team and be visible. Allow time for group interaction.
- Be patient and tolerant of a temporary reduction in productivity.
- If possible, bring coffee and donuts in for a break, or order in for lunch.
- Consult with the EAP when and if you observe an employee having difficulties.

Be patient. Listen. And be prepared to respond with empathy and compassion.

New Directions is here for you.

We're available to support you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.