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# Staff Debrief Tool kit

**This kit contains:**

**“The Pause” – voluntary activity  
for staff for care at the  
End of Life**

**Top Tips for Supporting Staff  
through Debriefing**

**Tips for Managers  
Supporting Staff following a  
Traumatic Incident at work**



**Take a minute:** This is a voluntary activity for staff “The Pause” for care at the End of Life. This activity has been developed to nurture caregivers’ resilience in caring for dying patients. “The Pause” is a 30-60 -second period of silence at the time of a patient’s death shared by the team at the bedside. The purpose is to honour the human life and the efforts of the team. “The Pause” is initiated by the physician or any other team member and participation is voluntary. It is a time to honour and reset ready to continue to carry on caring for patients

## “The Pause” - Definition

“The Pause” Is Important for Patients  
at the End of Life  
Period of silence honours life, “caregivers” efforts

- ◆ A 30 - 60 second period of silence at the time of a patient’s death
- ◆ Shared by caregivers at the patient’s bedside
- ◆ Purpose To honour the human life and the medical team
- ◆ To provide closure to the established relationship between the caregivers and the patient, preparing the team to take care of future patients
- ◆ This is not a debriefing of medical events of CPR
- ◆ This is not a prayer or religious practice, rather a time to honour all and reset
- ◆ It is not a policy, Voluntary participation.

## “The Pause” -Script

“Let us take a moment just to pause and honour the person in the bed. She/he who was alive and now has died. She/he loved and was loved. Let us stand and take a moment to honour this person in the bed.

Let us honour and recognise the valiant efforts of the team that were made on her/his behalf.”

# **TOP TIPS FOR**

## **Supporting staff through Debriefing After a Patient's Death or Traumatic Incident**

As caring professionals we may experience grief after the death of a patient, or after the discharge of a dying patient. We may be deeply affected by traumatic incidents in our work.

Debriefing sessions allow individuals and teams to review such experiences and how they have been affected.

Debriefing sessions can be led by any member of the team /Trust Chaplaincy Team or a member of the Hospital Palliative Care Team if the patient was known to their service.

**Below are some tips to support staff in either a group or 1-1 debrief**

### **FACTS: What Happened?**

- ◆ What was happening around the time of the incident (beforehand)?
- ◆ What happened next?
- ◆ How did you or the team function?
- ◆ Thoughts: What were you thinking?
- ◆ Feelings: What feelings did you experience? How about now?
- ◆ What was the outcome?

### **STRESS: What impact did it have?**

- ◆ What was the hardest part for you (emotionally);
- ◆ and for the team?

### **LEARN: What has been learned?**

- ◆ What went well and what didn't?
- ◆ What was missing? What additional information, knowledge, skills, etc. do you think was needed in the situation?
- ◆ What would we do differently next time, individually, as a team?
- ◆ What do you need now (emotionally, cognitively, physically, spiritually)

# Tips for Managers Supporting staff following a traumatic incident at work

Stress-related problems are real.  
Unresolved emotional distress can cause poor work performance  
and the loss of good staff.

Making sure that staff know where to find help  
and making that help easily accessible can significantly improve  
the recovery process after a traumatic incident at work.

## Helpful tips for workplace recovery post-incident:

### Address safety and physical needs first

If safety is an issue post-incident, move staff to a safe location as soon as possible and ensure their physical needs are met (eg. water, tissues)

### Be aware of common stress and trauma reactions

- ◆ Anger, frustration, irritability
- ◆ Withdrawal, isolation
- ◆ Tearfulness, uncontrollable crying
- ◆ Shock, confusion, disorientation, denial
- ◆ Shaking, dizziness, chest pain, other physical complaints

### Give your support

- ◆ Remember that everyone responds to stress differently
- ◆ People may experience many different feelings at the same time
- ◆ Sometimes just being present is the most supportive thing you can do – it's ok if you don't know the 'right words' to say
- ◆ Give information only if you're sure it's correct – in crisis situations 'facts' can change and resulting in miscommunication

## Helpful tips for ongoing workplace recovery

As a manager your presence and compassion are important resources in supporting staff.

### Use accurate and careful language

When referring to a death, for example, use died rather than a euphemism such as passed away. Take care not to rush to judgement and blame.

### Expect staff to talk about the event and their reactions and feelings to it.

It may be helpful to arrange a debriefing session. A debrief allows individuals and teams to review the experience and how this affected them (see 'Top Tips for Supporting Staff through Debriefing').

### Be aware of the basics of the grieving process

As you listen to and work with staff, take note of any significant changes in behaviour eg attendance issues, forgetfulness, irritability, decreased performance.

### Know when to refer staff for professional/further help

This may be based on observed changes in behaviour or from concerns the staff member brings directly to you.

- ◆ Confidential psychological support for staff: see EAP

#### Accessing the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

FLO: click on 'For Staff'  
click on 'Your Staff Benefits',  
click on the icon 'Employee Assistance'

This gives:

a confidential phone line staffed by trained counsellors – 0800 085 1376  
a website – [www.well-online.co.uk](http://www.well-online.co.uk) (username - DTlogin ; password - wellbeing)

- ◆ Consider Occupational Health Support
- ◆ Informal, confidential listening support is available through the Chaplaincy Department (ext. 89500)

## Respect cultural and social diversity among your staff

This is particularly important in times of crisis, when staff are more likely to talk about their personal values and beliefs.

## Avoid statements that, although well intended, may devalue a person's experiences or feelings

Some examples include: "I don't understand why this is still bothering you. Everyone else seems to be handling this ok." "I know how you feel"

## Encourage resources to develop resilience in the workplace

- ◆ Schwartz rounds offer a safe framework for exploring how our experiences at work impact us as human beings (see FLO)
- ◆ Sage and Thyme – provides a foundation for developing listening and communication skills (see FLO)

## Being Aware of Grief in the Workplace

We normally associate grief with the death of a loved one. In the workplace, grief may be the result of a critical incident or traumatic event.

### Myths about Grief:

- ◆ All losses are the same.
- ◆ Grief gradually decreases over time.
- ◆ All people grieve in the same way.
- ◆ Managers should be able to "fix" the problem.
- ◆ Grief does not cause physical illness.
- ◆ Time heals all wounds.
- ◆ When grief is resolved, it never comes up again.
- ◆ Anger is wrong.
- ◆ We can always return to "business as usual."
- ◆ Grief can be handled without support from others.
- ◆ Crying is a sign of weakness.
- ◆ Ignoring feelings will make them go away.
- ◆ Memorials and funerals are unimportant to staff.
- ◆ Strong staff don't show emotions at work.

## Being Aware of yourself as Manager

As a manager find time for yourself. Be aware of your own emotions and needs. It's difficult to support others when you've neglected to take care of yourself.

Recognise your limits as a manager. You are not expected to be a counsellor or social worker for staff. Focus on work performance - for non-work related issues, support staff by knowing what resources the Trust has available for staff wellbeing and signpost your staff.

Reference source: **International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc., [www.icisf.org](http://www.icisf.org)**



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