

# Self-Care for Adults

## Idaho Youth Suicide Prevention Program

After a crisis, taking steps to care for the people involved is vitally important. Prior planning will be key so that structure is in place which lightens the stress of the situation and enables people to begin recovery. Remember that some people will be stressed not because they were directly involved, but because they know the victim(s), feel guilty in some way about what happened, have preexisting physical or emotional conditions, or have recent or past events which cause them to relive the trauma.

### STEPS TO FOLLOW TO HELP STAFF

1. Hold meetings with staff as soon as possible to debrief. Allow people to discuss the event, validate feelings, and enumerate what went well, as well as what needs modification. Keep notes of this meeting and implement changes in crisis plan.
  - a. Ask people what they need. Try to offer support for what is reasonable and can easily be offered. Follow up if possible.
  - b. Ask the group members how they can support one another. List ideas for what people are willing to do to help themselves and others. Ask them to follow through.
  - c. Ask how people have managed in a similar crisis and brainstorm a list of activities. Create a list from these ideas to add to the list that follows or to hand out later.
  - d. Offer a list of ways to minimize stress and symptoms of stress to be aware of in the next days and weeks. Include phone numbers for EAP's or other community resources. Hold another debriefing meeting within a week and continue with other meetings as needed.
2. Continually remind everyone that the victim(s) has a right to confidentiality and that this right must be protected. Also discuss any concerns about media requests and how these are to be handled. Provide a protocol for what will happen the next day.

### OTHER IDEAS TO IMPLEMENT

1. Consider offering an in-house group after school with an EAP counselor or community therapist if several staff need more support.

2. Provide educational in-services or workshops around stress management and self-care.
3. Plan a way to have fun together, either with staff only or to include family members, such as a staff potluck, a volleyball or baseball game, or in-house movie night.
4. Find ways to help staff laugh. Consider having a drama group present a funny piece at lunch, share a joke of the day, or place benign cartoons on handouts or doors.
5. Offer in-house exercise, walking, meditation groups, or other stress release activities on employees' lunch hour or after work.

Stress management is key to crisis management. Successful stress management is built on prevention and planning, a solid understanding of how we react to stress, support for colleagues, good self-care, and seeking help when needed.

## **SELF-CARE**

### Things to Remember When Trying to Understand Crisis Events

- No one who is involved in a crisis is untouched by it.
- It is normal to feel anxious about our own and other people's safety.
- Profound sadness, grief, and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Acknowledging our feelings helps us recover.
- Focusing on our strengths and abilities will help us to heal.
- Accepting help from community programs and resources is healthy.
- We each have different needs and different ways of coping.

### Some Ways to Minimize Your Stress After a Crisis

- Participate in the organized debriefings or critiques.
- Reconnect with your family members.
- Have a physical checkup if you have continuing or unusual symptoms.
- Continue normal activities, including work and leisure routines. Stay involved with your interests but limit extra duties for a while.
- Consider stress management techniques, such as meditation, acupuncture, or massage therapy.
- Draw upon your spirituality and personal beliefs. Take advantage of faith-based counselors or workplace counseling units (EAPs) or community therapists.

- Avoid alcohol, tobacco, or drugs to cope with stress. Seek professional substance abuse treatment, if necessary.
- Talk to and support your peers. Be aware of the difference between needing therapy and regular listening to or talking with a peer or a friend.
- Consider walking, perhaps with a peer group or family members, or continue your own exercise program.
- Monitor yourself for unusual feelings of stress. Alert a supervisor if you see these signs in peers.
- Get regular sleep and relaxation and eat healthy.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Find ways to laugh and appreciate life.

### Signs that Adults Need Stress Management Assistance

- Difficulty communicating thoughts
- Difficulty maintaining balance
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Poor work performance
- Tunnel vision or muffled hearing
- Disorientation or confusion
- Reluctance to leave home
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Crying easily
- Fear of crowds, strangers, or being alone
- Difficulty sleeping
- Easily frustrated
- Limited attention span
- Headaches or stomach problems
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Difficulty concentrating
- Depression, sadness
- Mood-swings
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt

The information contained here was compiled from best practice materials from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Red Cross.

The Idaho Youth Suicide Prevention Program is a partnership between the Idaho Department of Education and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. The program is funded by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Suicide Prevention Program and the Garrett Lee Smith State/Tribal Youth Suicide Prevention and Early Intervention Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

This publication was supported by the Grant Number 2 801 OT 009017, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.