

Aurora Employee Assistance Program

How To Help Those You Care About

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 set a time line by which a person "should" recover. Each person experiences trauma and its consequences differently. One person cannot know how another feels. Recognize that someone else may recover more quickly, or take much longer than you would in the same circumstance. Remind the survivor that confusing emotions are normal.
- Do not attempt to reassure the survivor that everything will be ok. Everything is not ok. Do not tell the survivor that you know how he or she feels. You don't. Often such attempts are really aimed at relieving your own anxiety about how you feel about what has happened to the survivor.
- Tell the survivor how you feel, and that you are sorry that they have been hurt.
- Acknowledge the event. Pretending that nothing happened may seem like the easiest thing to do, but it won't help affected individuals recover.
- Don't be afraid to ask how someone is doing. Do not ask for details of the trauma. If the survivor wants to talk, listen. The best thing to do is let the survivor know that you are there and that you care. It is not necessary to try to make things better. Be willing to say nothing. Just being there is often all that can help.
- Listen. Asking detailed questions can come across as intrusive. If the survivor wants to talk, just listen. Talking about the event is an important part of healing. But if he or she is not ready to talk about it, don't push.
- Don't be afraid to encourage a survivor to ask for help, including counseling, if necessary. And don't be afraid to ask for help yourself even if you are not directly involved.
- 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 the boss first), or other specific favors.



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