

Delaware County's Leadership Guide to Restoring Resiliency within the Workforce:

This pandemic has been a disruptive event for many. It is still reasonable for our workforce to feel high levels of personal and professional stress which will ultimately affect their job performance and personal relationships. At times like these, Leadership has the dual responsibility of both supporting the employees and guiding them back to productivity. To be most effective, it can be helpful to know what kind of reactions you might expect to see from employees, and what you can do to help them.

Some Common Reactions to Abnormal Events can include:

Feeling shocked or in a state of disbelief

Having a range of responses- may be anything from emotional outbursts to crying to no visible reaction at all

Fear & Anxiety

Anger and blaming- towards, coworkers, themselves, leadership or the organization

Feeling unsafe- regardless of whether there is a current threat to safety

Poor Concentration and decreased productivity for a time

Irritability- may be quick to anger or become annoyed

Depression & sadness

Interacting more with others or withdrawing

Hypersensitivity or changes in level of activity- feeling fidgety & moving around more than usual

Reluctance to do a particular task or even come into work

Physical reactions such as rapid breathing, increased heart rate, fatigue, headache, stomach ache and shakiness

As a Leader, the following are things to keep in mind for yourself as well as your workforce:

During a disruptive event, our body's natural survival mechanisms kick in. Our brains send chemicals like adrenaline and cortisol to help us react in a way that would increase our chances of survival. Our brain also stores the memories of these disruptive events/threats, so it can react more quickly if a similar event is encountered

Because our brains are trying to make sense of this event, it can slow down the recovery process if we try to deny our feelings or fight reactions. It may be helpful to realize that if flashbacks or dreams occur, it is a normal part of recovery and will usually diminish over time. If we can accept our reactions and not fight them, they typically go away faster

Everyone reacts to disruptive events their own way and with varying intensities. Factors that impact how we react, include previous experiences, physical/mental health status prior to the event, social supports and coping strategies, religious beliefs and other life stressors

Expect recovery. With the help of social supports and coping skills most people begin to feel better within a few weeks. It takes time to recover so be patient with yourself and your staff, but know that most people who experience a disruptive event do not develop post-traumatic stress disorder

Tips for supporting employees:

As soon as possible, communicate directly with all employees to share as much factual and honest information as known as things are changing day to day

Have patience with your staff as at times, it is a normal response during a disruptive event to sometimes freeze or have difficulty thinking

Express care and concern for employee's safety and wellbeing

Acknowledge and thank your employees for an effective response during this pandemic

Be visible and check in with employees, ask them how they are doing and express that you are glad they are safe and doing well

Make sure to listen and understand the employee's common reactions to this abnormal event

Provide an opportunity for the employees to be able to talk about their feelings like an onsite individual or group EAP session or telephonic EAP Counseling Sessions

Be mindful for employee's request for time off- but for some its more helpful to keep their routine and continue working

So, what can you do to take care of yourself?

During and after a disruptive event, it can be a very stressful time for leadership as well. It is important to take care of yourself, especially during times of high stress, as it will enable you to be more productive and helpful to your employees. Here are some suggestions for you but also for your workforce:

- Eat healthy and drink lots of water- your body and mind need the nutrients to recover from stress and expel the stress chemicals
- Engage in regular exercise as this helps to boost chemicals that improve mood, reduce stress and improve sleep
- Try to maintain your regular sleep routine- if having trouble sleeping, get up and do a relaxing activity for a little while to distract your mind from worries
- Avoid alcohol or drugs to cope as well as consuming caffeine or other stimulants, as they can increase anxiety and interfere with sleep
- Help someone else- be a support to your colleagues and employees
- Do things you enjoy- part of taking care of yourself is making time to relax; this gives you a break from worries and helps to maintain balance
- Talk to someone- family, friends, coworkers, a counselor, faith mentor, or anyone else whom you feel comfortable sharing your feelings with and is helpful to you

- Return to routine- as soon as you are able to, engage in your normal routine; this may help you regain your sense of control and predictability of life
- Think about other times- when you have coped with difficult situations. What positive coping strategies worked for you then? Can you practice them now?
- Some examples:
 - Relaxed Breathing
 - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
 - Grounding
 - Meditation
 - Mindfulness

When is it time to seek professional assistance?

- If you are unable to care for yourself or dependents
- Experience significant impairment in your ability to function at work or in relationships
- Feel intense sadness or depression for more than 2 weeks
- Have increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Have thoughts of harming yourself or others

DelCo Resources:

DCCCT- 855-889-7827

24/7 Telehealth Line- 855-464-9342

CRS- 610-619-8616

Crozer Crisis Center- 610-447-7600

Spiritual Helpline- 717-303-3538