

Supporting staff in times of crisis



What might they be feeling?

Physical effects, such as increases in heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension and breathing; also may experience nausea, shaking and sweating.

They might find it difficult to relax or switch off, as mind and body continue to process the incident(s).

They may have feelings of being helpless and hopeless and be struggling with multiple losses.

Memories and images of the event(s) may appear unexpectedly in dreams, nightmares, flashbacks, day to day thoughts.

Relationships may suffer.

Staff may not know what is happening to them

As an incident unfolds an individual may experience some unfamiliar reactions. This is because our bodies take the major force of the impact and automatically respond in ways that allow us to protect ourselves

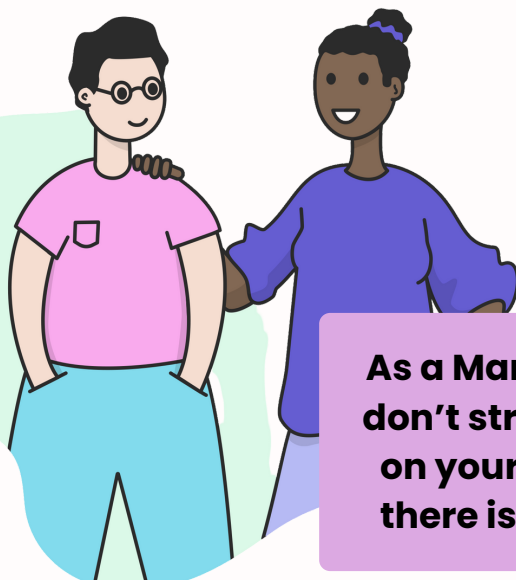
Why is this happening to an individual?

People respond to crises in different ways. Mostly we respond with resilience, however, how we respond depends on factors like:

- Our support network
- Our previous experience of distressing events
- Our perceptions of our capacity to cope and
- The nature and severity of the crisis itself



Strong emotions and feelings are NORMAL responses to ABNORMAL situations



As a Manager don't struggle on your own there is help

How long will people feel like this?

Some people will begin to feel better, calmer, and back in control after a few days.

For others it can take a few weeks and sometimes a few months.

Each person will have **their own unique way** of getting through this time, and therefore it is important to find the right strategy that suits you, your personality, and your family circumstances.





How to support staff during this period

During times of stress and crisis employees turn to their managers for support and guidance, as managers represent a knowledgeable authority figure. Managers are experienced in providing answers to workplace problems and hence employees often feel managers can provide answers to personal as well as workplace issues. Remember that as managers, you are not experts in mental health, or counsellors or psychiatrists and your employee may need professional support at this time.

CARE for immediate needs

PROTECT from any further distress and threat

COMFORT Listen, be respectful and offer support – be empathic

SUPPORT Offer relevant information and practical support

PROVIDE Coping information – what has worked in past?

CONNECT Encourage social connections

NORMALISE individual responses

By recognising your own crisis reactions you will be emotionally and psychologically more available to support your staff and colleagues

Recognise the early warning signs of stress

There are many possible early warning signs of stress, including emotional behaviour, lateness, absence, mood swings, and a decline in performance or motivation. The Validium EAP staff can give you assistance in recognising these signs, it is important that the situation and its causes are managed sensitively and as soon as possible.

How Validium can help

Referring Staff to the EAP

As a manager you will inevitably meet situations which are beyond your expertise or where you lack the time or the skills to assist your staff. The Validium EAP is a place to which you can refer staff so they can receive help from people professionally trained to deal with their problems. Referring staff to the service can also help to free up your time so you can focus on your priorities. There are two main types of Validium EAP referral:

An informal referral

This is where an employee discusses a problem with a manager, and the manager reminds them about the help offered by the Validium EAP and encourages them to make contact. There is no need in this case for the manager to contact the Validium EAP, unless they wish to talk the situation through themselves.

A management referral

This is where the manager formally refers the individual for help to the Validium EAP, alongside other actions that are being taken to support the individual. In this instance, the manager contacts the Validium EAP to start the referral process and discuss the situation. The counsellors call the employee, and with the employee's consent, can then call the manager, simply to let them know that the individual has made contact.



Validium's top tips on getting the most from your EAP in times of crisis

- **Get to know what the EAP offers you and your staff** The EAP comprises teams of professional lawyers, financial specialists, debt counsellors, occupational health nurses, counsellors, e-counsellors, management support consultants, elder and childcare specialists as well as a wealth of information, all available confidentially.
- **Highlight to employees the confidentiality** of the service. Many people are reluctant to seek help for fear that their issue may become known by others and that this may affect their job security or their chances of progression. People who seek help are actually demonstrating good judgement and dealing appropriately with whatever personal issue they have. It is important that concerns about confidentiality should not stop someone from seeking help.
- **Communicate to employees** that no information regarding the fact they have called or the contents of any conversations will be fed back to your organisation. Confidentiality is only broken if the individual seeking help is at risk of harming themselves, others or if the organisation is at risk.
- **Use the EAP as a developmental tool.** You may not have a particular issue, but there may be aspects of your role as a manager that you find difficult, or which you are uncomfortable with. What we call "Life Skills for Living in the 21st Century" – things like stress management skills, work/life balance skills, anger management, better communications skills, change management skills, assertiveness skills, decision making skills and guidance for managers in how to manage teams during difficult times.