



PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING COLLEAGUES

A Message from the Stress Metabolism Initiative

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID?

- Evidence-based strategies for decreasing psychological stress after a trauma/disaster
- Often used to support first responders and healthcare professionals
- Like physical first aid, it can be given by anyone that knows the basic principles

BASIC STRATEGIES: LOOK + LISTEN + LINK

LOOK: Don't be afraid to ask your colleagues if they need support, directly or indirectly.

"I saw that you were involved in that really tough case, just wanted to see how you're doing."

"Things are really stressful right now, how have you been managing?"

"I noticed that you seemed a little stressed today, just wanted to check in."

"Do you want to grab a cup of coffee?"

LISTEN: Know that just listening can be an incredibly effective support.

1. Try to find a space away from others to talk if you can
2. Understand their unique experience, allow them to talk as much (or as little) as they want.

"What is bothering you the most/what is your biggest concern right now?"

"Is there anything I can do/get for you now?"

3. Use Reflective Listening & Express Validation

RESTATE & PARAPHRASE:	<i>"It sounds like you're really overwhelmed"</i> <i>"I'm hearing that you're not sure what to do right now."</i> <i>"If I'm understanding correctly, it seems like..."</i>
ACKNOWLEDGE EMOTIONS:	<i>"I get that you're feeling really angry right now"</i> <i>"You look pretty shaken up"</i> <i>"Anyone in your situation would probably feel upset"</i>
SHOW UNDERSTANDING & NON-JUDGEMENT:	<i>"It totally makes sense that you'd feel that way."</i> <i>"I'd probably feel the same if I were you."</i> <i>"Right now, I think everyone is feeling more overwhelmed than usual"</i> <i>"There's no wrong way to feel right now." "That makes sense"</i> <i>"I think it's a pretty human reaction to be upset after experiencing that."</i>

LINK - COPING: Help peers connect to coping strategies & supports that they know work for them by asking **Three Coping Questions**.

1. **What usually helps you feel better (calmer, focused, grounded), what can you do right now?**
If they don't know, be ready to give some suggestions:

Take a few deep breaths	Engage the parasympathetic nervous system to calm body +mind
Care for Basic Needs	Drink water, get a coffee, eat, use the bathroom
Notice the Positive	Notice positive, meaningful things at work (even if they are small); Connect with gratitude
Do Something Physical	Take a short walk around the unit, stretch, step outside if possible
Find an Anchor Point	Identify things that are still consistent & predictable, like supportive colleagues, professional values, being compassionate, medical skills + knowledge, reasons for going into healthcare...

2. **"If you're still feeling this way later, is there anything that you can do at home to de-stress?"**
3. **"What supports can you connect with during the rest of your shift and when you go home?"**

You might also ask: "Is there anything I can do to help you get through the rest of your shift?"

"Is it ok if I text you later?"

LINK - RESOURCES: If they need more support, do not hesitate to suggest additional resources.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If someone needs more help that PFA can offer, you can reach out to their supervisors to help get support. If there is an immediate safety issue or if a person is in significant mental distress, PFA providers should call 911 or accompany the person to the nearest Emergency Department.

- ✓ **Confidential Crisis Hotline, 1-888-NYC-WELL (or text WELL to 65173)**
This NYC based hotline offers in the moment support and can also connect callers to mental health providers based on insurance carrier and location.
- ✓ **Maimonides Virtual Counseling for Employees, 718-283-7864:**
Virtual appointments are available for all hospital employees on short notice. Visits are confidential.
- ✓ **Counseling for Residents and Fellows:**
Dr. Erica Hutchison is available to provide free and confidential counseling to all MMC residents and fellows. Reach her at 347-996-6090 or ehutchison@maimonidesmed.org
- ✓ **Maimonides Chaplaincy and/or Spiritual Support:**
Call 718-283-8500, or reach out directly to Rabbi Lesser at 718-283-7604, Father Francis at 718-283-8402
- ✓ **Helpful directories for making mental health appointments:**
 - **ZocDoc:** <https://www.zocdoc.com/>
 - **Psychology Today:** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us>