

Hot Walk & Talk

This protocol is designed to provide helpful psychological first aid immediately after a team member experiences a particularly distressing or disturbing incident and is undergoing a completely normal stress reaction. *This applies when there has been no physical injury and the person is stable enough to proceed.*

- Ensure your co-workers physical safety and ask them to walk with you away from area to neutral ground, outside if possible. Grab a bottle of water.
- Walk beside them, setting a brisk pace at first to help them discharge some of the stress. Ultimately let them control the pace as it naturally slows as they calm.
- Remind them they are safe now, you are here to provide support and their experience is normal.
- Ask them to tell you what happened. You want them to create a narrative, from beginning to end. If they seem stuck in the incident, prompt them to move on by asking “and then what happened..?” until they get to the present moment, walking with you.
- After this initial debrief:
 - If your agency requires it, offer to accompany and assist with the completion of an incident report. If so, help to remind them to stay focused on their breathing, and open posture.
- Ask what would be helpful now? Give choices...call family member, get a sandwich, take a break, go back to work, talk to supervisor? Let them have control over choices.
- Let them know you will remain available to them and encourage them to access additional supports
- Stay with the individual and ask a colleague to notify the supervisor as needed if appropriate and desired

The supervisor:

Assess whether individual should finish their shift - assisting with travel arrangements if needed. Follow up with call to ensure individual arrived home safely. Update other staff about the incident as needed. Work with individual on any case management or other relevant decisions in relation to the incident. Check in periodically with affected person and continue to offer support in the weeks that follow.

Adapted from: Patricia Fisher, Ph.D. in Building Resilient Teams, Tend Academy, 2015

Mind/Body Medical Institute: Relax in a Hurry

Mini relaxation exercises help reduce anxiety and tension immediately! You can do them with your eyes open or closed (but make sure that your eyes are open when you are driving!). You can do them any place, at any time, no one will know that you are doing them.

Ways to "do a mini"...

Switch to diaphragmatic breathing; if you are having trouble, try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth, or take a deep breath. You should feel your stomach rising about an inch as you breathe in, and falling about an inch as you breathe out. If this is still difficult for you, lie on your back or on your stomach; you will be more aware of your breathing pattern. Remember, it is impossible to breathe diaphragmatically if you are holding in your stomach! So...relax your stomach muscles.

Mini Version 1

Count very slowly to yourself from ten down to zero, one number for each breath. Thus, with the first diaphragmatic breath, you say "ten" to yourself, with the next breath, you say "nine", etc. If you start feeling light-headed or dizzy, slow down the counting. When you get to "zero", see how you are feeling. If you are feeling better, great! If not, try doing it again.

Mini Version 2

As you inhale, count very slowly up to four; as you exhale, count slowly back down to one. Thus, as you inhale, you say to yourself "one, two, three, four," as you exhale, you say to yourself "four, three, two, one." Do this several times.

Mini Version 3

After each inhalation, pause for a few seconds; after you exhale, pause again for a few seconds. Do this for several breaths.

Some good times to "do a mini" are when...

- stuck in traffic
- put on "hold" during an important phone call
- waiting in your doctor's waiting room
- someone says something which bothers you
- stopped at red lights
- waiting for a phone call
- sitting in the dentist's chair
- feeling overwhelmed by what you need to accomplish in the near future
- standing in line
- in pain

The only time minis do not work is when you forget to do them!!! So go do a mini...

Mind Body Medical Institute: <http://www.bensonhenryinstitute.org>