

Coping During Trying Times



Traumatic events, such as floods, employee deaths, hurricanes, wild fires, and work place accidents, have an emotional impact on different spheres of our lives, whether we have experienced the trauma ourselves or are working directly with those who have. Not the least of these areas of impact, though one that is easy to overlook, is the impact on our relationships with others. Frequent reactions related to the stress of coping with traumatic incidents are a sense of frustration, increased feelings of anger, fatigue, and having a “short fuse” – all of which affect our relationships with others.

Anger Management Strategies:

- Predict situations; know your anger triggers and signs of decreased tolerance for frustration. The more you know about your anger patterns, the more options you have to work with them constructively.
- Take deep breaths, count up to 10 before reacting, focus on something less emotionally charged, use self-talk.
- Identify the problem, brainstorm solutions, and try a course of action.
- Identify and accept your angry feelings. Sometimes it really helps to talk to a friend or someone who is not directly involved.
- Communicate – don’t jump to conclusions. Slow down, think, and listen carefully with an open mind to what the other person is saying before replying.
- Use “time outs” – if some space and time alone to think and reorganize will allow for a safe and constructive resolution later, excuse yourself saying you need a little time alone before you can continue the discussion.
- Use humor – imagining silly scenes or situations can help defuse your anger.
- Learn from your positive experiences. What’s worked in the past?

Managing Your Work:

- Remember you may not be up to 100% right now. Give yourself some room to be less than perfect. Talk to others.
- Keep in mind that everyone - co-workers, bosses, and customers are also all dealing with challenging times and may not be themselves. Patience and understanding applied to yourself and others will go a long way.
- If people are short-tempered or angry, try not to take it personally.

Call Your EAP

If you want to speak with someone about your experiences, or if you would like a stress management consultation, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Federal or federalized employees can call 1-800-222-0364 (TTY 1-888-262-7848). The FOH EAP is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.