

Leading Teams in Crisis



It's ok to say you're not ok

Team leaders can model this to their team. This is an unprecedented crisis, we are all under more stress than usual. Remind yourself and staff that struggling doesn't mean you aren't up to the job; it means you're human.

Don't be afraid to ask "it's tough, are you OK".

Compassionate leadership

Be visible, available and supportive. Communicate regularly. Model optimism in your communication. Panic and pessimism can be infectious too. During a crisis people look to their leaders for containment and direction.

Beware the superhero cape: Remind self and team - **"I do not need to have all of the solutions all the time"**. You will need to tolerate and manage uncertainty for yourself and your team.

Connect with Values leading a team and providing care consistent with values



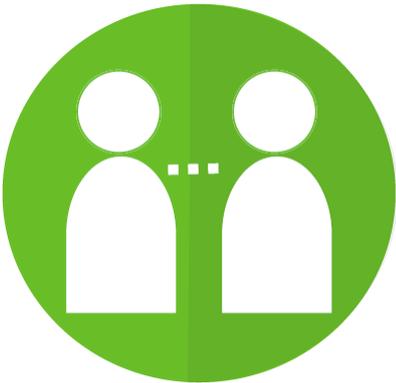
Ensure staff's basic needs are met



Ensure adequate breaks, hydration and nutrition. Give permission for staff to step back when they need it.

Make sure staff feel safe at work and are getting adequate sleep when off shift. This may mean allowing staff to not participate in debriefing or supportive exercises where this encroaches on their recovery time, break time or natural way of coping.

Create Supportive Space



Create supportive space for the team to be together. Team cohesion and peer support acts as a buffer against stress and trauma. Existing structures like handover or team huddles are **naturalistic opportunities for debriefing**. Consider extending handover to include a chance to debrief or spend a moment practicing mindfulness. The opportunity for staff to talk about and process experience can enhance support and team cohesion.

Wellbeing huddles can be a quick and effective way to check on colleagues on the shift, remind them to take a break, hydrate and eat. Consider setting up a “**buddy system**” of staff on each shift – giving explicit permission to look out for your buddy. Partner less experienced workers with their more experienced colleagues. Allow yourself, and others to do something unrelated to work which you find comforting, relaxing or fun, humour is a powerful moderator of stress.

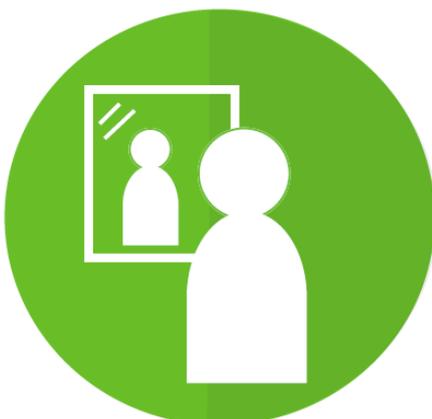
Compassion

Beware of your own inner critic. Your well-being is important. Show **self-compassion and be kind to yourself**. Practicing self-care will show your team that it is important and help them to sustain their ability to care for those in need.

Complement each other - confidence can be powerful motivator and stress moderator. In contrast, we know that rudeness increases clinical error. Although we can all become stressed in this environment we know that civility saves lives. Some staff need to talk while others need to be alone. Recognise and respect differences in yourself you patients and your team. Respond to feedback on what is helpful and what is not.



Check in with self



Check-in and monitor yourself over time. Notice any prolonged sadness or difficulty sleeping intrusive memories or hopelessness talk to a peer, supervisor or seek specialist support. Implement flexible schedules with team members who are struggling directly or as a result of their responsibilities outside of work.

Additional Information

We hope you find this guide useful. If you think it is just common sense, you are probably right. Many of these basic supports are the most powerful. However, these are often disrupted or forgotten during a busy shift or a crisis so it is important to maintain a focus on keeping them going.

But remember that hands-on help is at hand: consult with your ward psychologist or the wider inpatient psychology team. We are here to provide support to managers, team leaders and shift coordinators who often end up holding and containing much of the stress for their teams. We can support you and your team to sustain your collective wellbeing. Our aim is to be proactive and preventative. If we can support you now then we may be able to prevent unnecessary build-up of distress and prevent further issues developing in the future. However, we can also help you support your staff who are struggling or those who may be more psychologically vulnerable. We can offer this locally to your team and can also help you and your staff navigate the wider resources available in the Trust (e.g. <https://doris.dhc.nhs.uk/hr/health-wellbeing>). As your psychology team, we will continue to offer this support during the pandemic and when it recedes and the psychological after-effects become

Based on national guidelines:

British Psychological Society (2020). The psychological needs of healthcare staff as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak. (URL: <https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/News/News%20-%20Files/Psychological%20needs%20of%20healthcare%20staff.pdf>).

Dr Julie Highfielf, Consultant Clinical Psychologist with the Intensive Care Society and Cardiff Critical Care. (URL: <https://www.ics.ac.uk/ICS/Education/Wellbeing/ICS/Wellbeing.aspx?hkey=92348f51-a875-4d87-8ae4-245707878a5c>).

Adapted locally by:

Dr Jon Boakes (Consultant Clinical Psychologist) – Inpatient Rehabilitation Psychology

Mark Draper (Clinical Psychologist) – Acute Inpatient Psychology

Sammie Floyd (Assistant Psychologist) – Acute Inpatient Psychology