



For Friends and Family: Supporting Healthcare Workers in the Covid-19 Pandemic

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The wellbeing and emotional resilience of essential workers are likely to be severely tested during extended disasters or public health crises.

Support from close family members and friends can be crucial in fostering their ability to endure.

What is the Need?

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Need: Exposed to Multiple Stressors



-  Long hours
-  Virus exposure
-  Ongoing duties
-  Uncertainty
-  Resources
-  Fear for their own or loved ones' safety
-  Moral distress

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Moral Injury: Potential Causes



- Life and death triage or resource decisions
- Knowing that under different circumstances, a person's life could/may have been saved
- Not wanting to show up for work or volunteer for dangerous rotations / assignments
- Work duties affecting one's family
- Witnessing perceived unjustifiable acts that one feels powerless to confront
- NOT feeling as much empathy or compassion as one usually feels
- Surviving when others are dying
- Not being able to attend to family

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Need: Why it
May be Hard
for Them to
Ask for Help

- A strong service orientation
- Lack of time
- Fatigue
- Difficulties recognizing their own needs
- Stigma
- Fear of being a burden
- Not used to asking for help



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Strength	Guiding Ideal	Vulnerability
Placing the welfare of others above one's own welfare	Selflessness	Not seeking help for health problems because personal health is not a priority
Commitment to accomplishing missions and protecting others	Loyalty	Guilt and complicated bereavement after loss of others
Toughness and ability to endure hardships without complaint	Stoicism	Not aware of / acknowledging significant symptoms /suffering
Following an internal moral compass to choose "right" over "wrong"	Moral Code	Feeling frustrated and betrayed when others fail to follow a moral code
Becoming the best and most effective professional possible	Excellence	Feeling ashamed / denial or minimization of imperfections

Double Edged Sword of Values and Ideals

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Self-Care Obstacles: Attitudinal

- "It would be selfish to take a break from this work."
- "Others are working hard, so should I."
- "I'm okay, I'm fine, I'm not even tired."
- "The needs of those I'm supporting are more important than my own needs."
- "I'm not doing enough."
- "I can contribute the most by working all the time."
- "I don't want anyone to know how affected I am."
- "Only I can do x, y, and z."

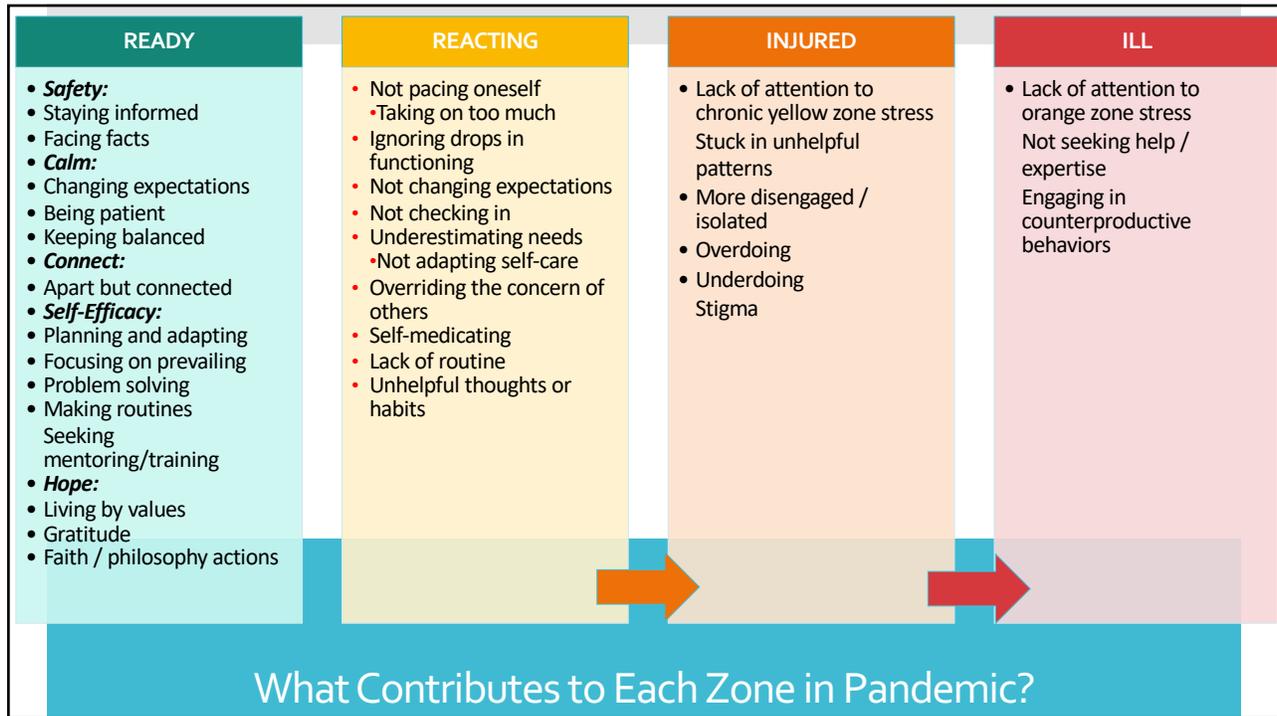


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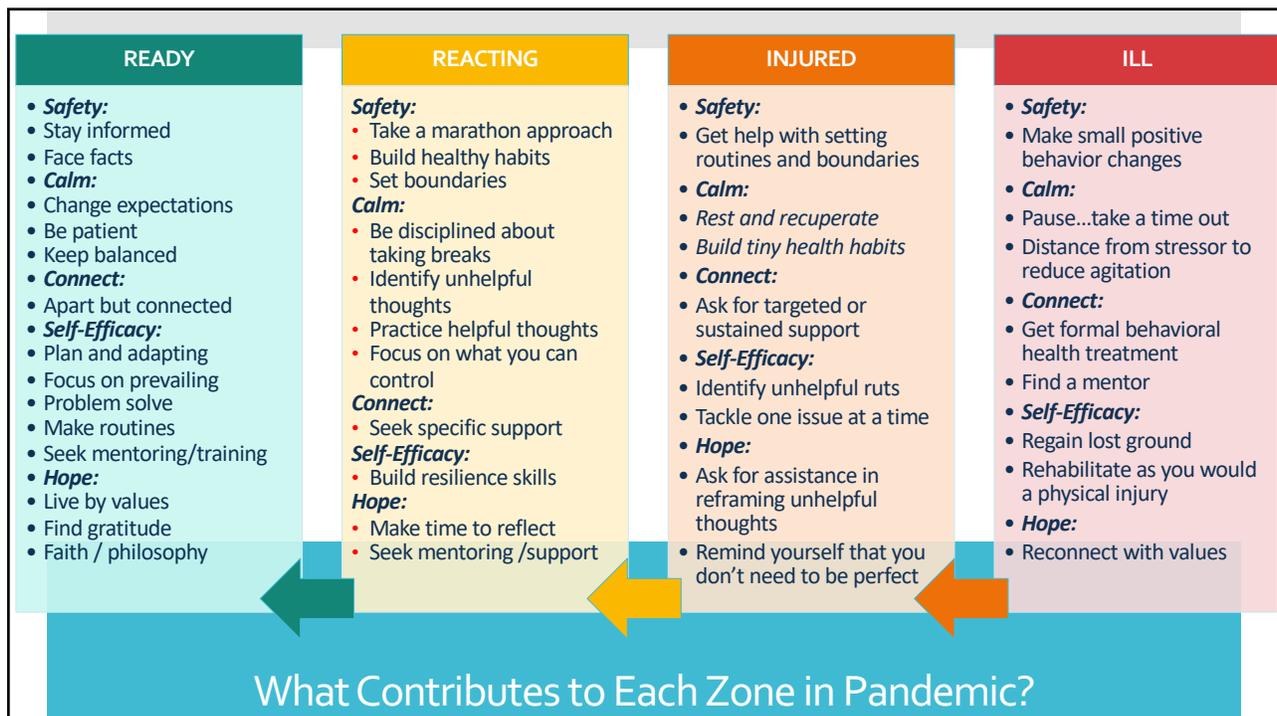
Stress Continuum: Circumstances and Features

READY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
<p>Circumstances: Well trained Supported</p> <p>Optimal functioning: At one's best In control Motivated</p>	<p>Circumstances: Responding to multiple stressors at work or home Double-edged sword vulnerabilities</p> <p>Mild and transient distress or impairment: Changes in mood Loss of motivation Loss of focus Physical changes</p>	<p>Circumstances: Strong or multiple stressors: •Trauma •Loss •Moral injury •Wear and tear</p> <p>More severe or persistent distress or impairment: Loss of control No longer feeling like normal self</p>	<p>Circumstances: Unhealed orange zone stress Additional stress Risk factors</p> <p>Clinical mental disorder: Symptoms persist and worsen Severe distress Functional impairment</p>

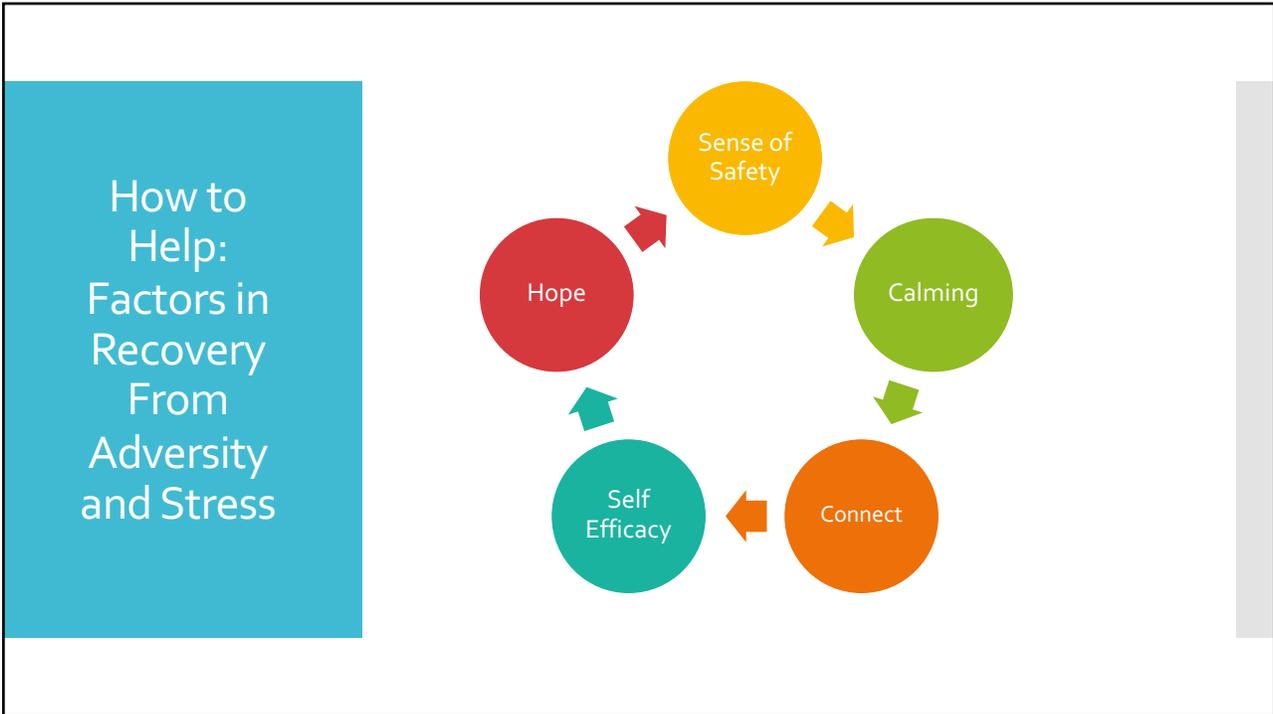
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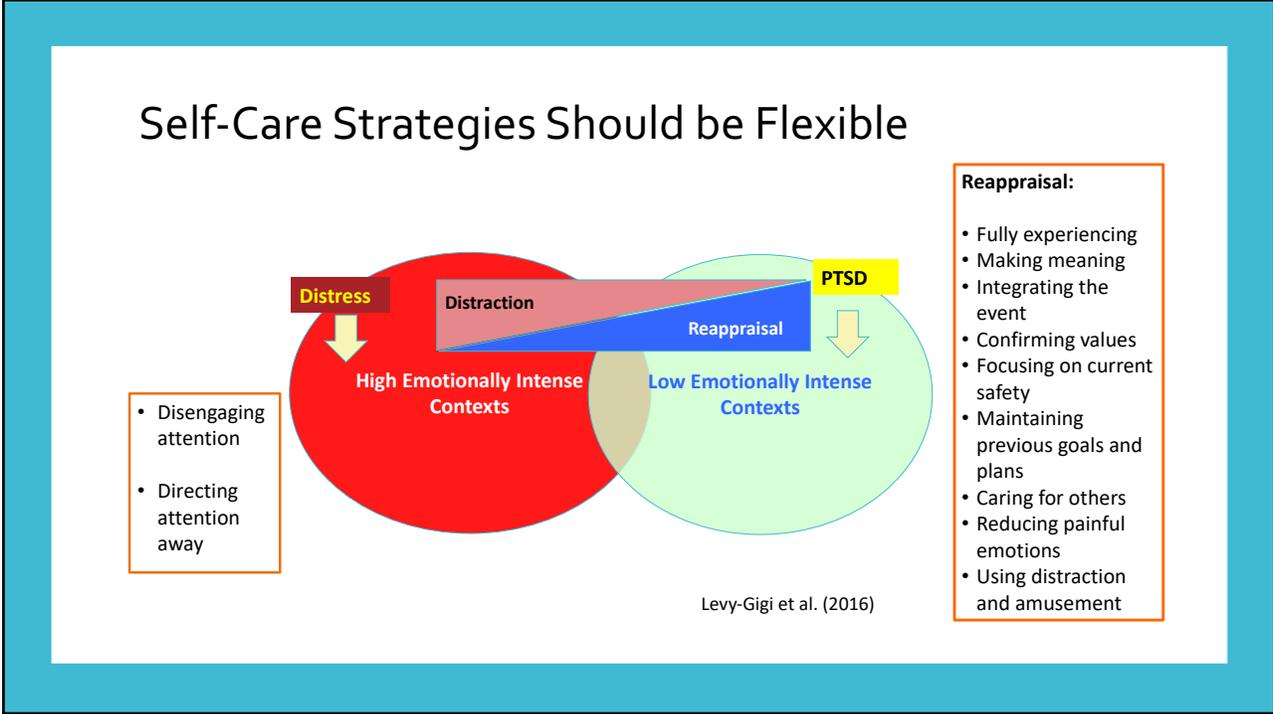
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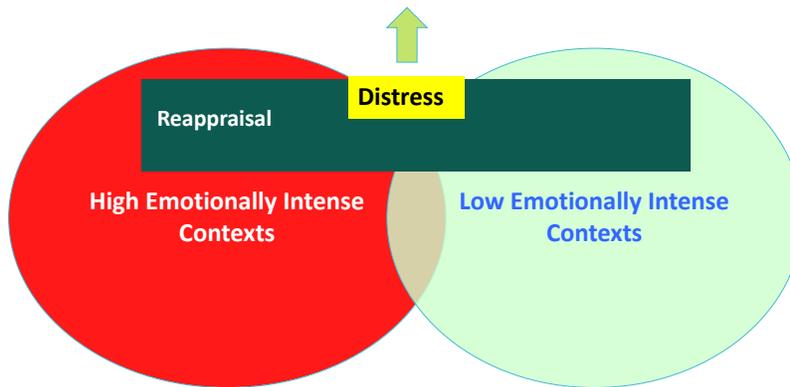


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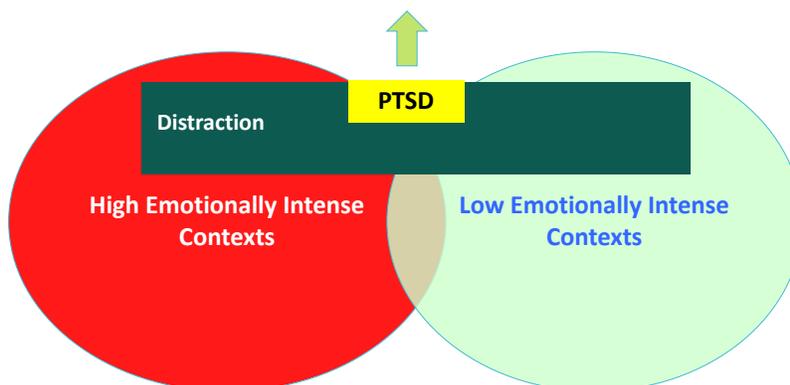
Self-Care Strategies Should be Flexible



Levy-Gigi et al. (2016)

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Self-Care Strategies Should be Flexible



Levy-Gigi et al. (2016)

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What helps you to feel safer?

What helps you feel calm?

What helps you to feel that you can persevere?

Safety

Calm

Self-Efficacy

Connectedness

Hope

1. What connections with others could help you get through this?
2. Do you need to add more?
3. Do you need to remove some existing connections?

1. What helps you have more hope, faith, optimism, or confidence?
2. What remains when everything is lost?

Stress First Aid: Self-Reflection

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What do you foster safety?

What do you do to encourage calm?

How do you help them feel they can cope or persevere?

Safety

Calm

Self-Efficacy

Connectedness

Hope

What do you do to help them get connected?

How do you help them to have more hope?

Stress First Aid: Helping Others

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Stress First Aid: Check

Common signs of significant stress:

- Loss of control of emotions
- No longer feeling like oneself
- Decreases in ability to function at work or home
- Changes in relationships
- Increased drinking or use of substances.

- If you point out these signs, but the response is "I'm fine," let them know that you have seen changes in their behavior and that you are concerned about them.
- Let them know you care and will be there if they do want to talk.
- Also offer different options for support:
 - *Instrumental support*: Practical assistance.
 - *Informational support*: Advise or guidance.
 - *Emotional support*: Empathy, care, and reassurance.

"When he's tired, he sometimes can't find words to express what he is feeling, so I will give specific options, like, "are you feeling tense / numb / worried?" I also watch his body language. When he is overly anxious, his legs bounce. If I suggest changing something about what is happening at that moment, he will agree."

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Check Skill: OSCAR

Observe

Observe:
Actively observe behaviors; look for patterns

State

State observations: State your observations of the behaviors; just the facts without interpretations or judgments

Clarify

Clarify Role: State why you are concerned about the behavior to validate why you are addressing the issue

Ask

Ask why: Seek clarification; try to understand the other person's perception of the behaviors

Respond

Respond: Provide Guided Options. Clarify concern if indicated; discuss desired behaviors and state options in behavioral terms

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Stress First Aid: Cover

"I learned ways to reduce her concerns so we could avoid anxiety. We also talked about potential things that might happen, and how we would cover our needs. If she felt that her safety was compromised, I sat with her and did my best to be empathic and a calming presence. Trying to tell her she shouldn't worry can make it worse. Sometimes you just have to close your mouth and let there be silence."

- Ask how the situation has affected the person's sense of safety
- Ask what ways they prefer for regaining a sense of safety.
- Brainstorm and make plans to reduce their concerns in any way possible.
- Be well-informed about information that can help you and them stay safe.
- Keep track of resources that might be helpful.
- Read or talk with others who have been through similar situations about their safety strategies.




- Stress reactions can contribute to hypersensitivity, reduction in problem-solving abilities, and trouble self-regulating emotions, which can make a person feel unsafe in relationships.
- Balance those types of stress reactions by reducing your own reactivity and remaining calm.
- Know how not to overreact and what to do to be supportive, especially if the person feels out of control in some way.
- Give consistent support messages, such as "we will get through this together".

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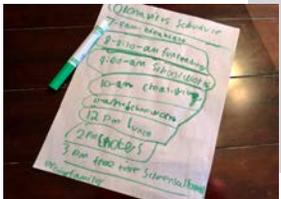
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Stress First Aid: Calm

"I try to listen and find ways to help her reduce tension. Sometimes I remind her to use her preferred coping skills. Sometimes she may not want me to offer suggestions, she may just need to vent. I've learned to ask her if she wants this to be a venting conversation or a problem-solving conversation."

- Try to help them be disciplined about keeping calming activities in their schedule, even if it means switching to ones that take less time
- Give them help with calming themselves down:
 - Problem-solving
 - Exercise
 - Drawing a bath
 - Making a nice meal for them
 - Supporting them in breathing, meditation, or guided imagery exercises.
- Give them opportunities to talk or vent about what concerns them.
- Help them with their self-talk:
 - Talk with them about the fact that they and everyone around them are not at their best at times like this.
 - Remind them to try to be more tolerant and forgiving of themselves and others, to find more peace.





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Stress First Aid: Connect

- Be creative in reaching out to show support
- Solve problems and give practical assistance, such as by helping them to:
 - maintain routines
 - complete tasks outside of work
 - have a healthy diet
- Focus on gratitude
- Schedule more meaningful, positive activities
- Tolerate stress reactions
- Respect their duties
- Encourage them to socialize with mentors or others who understand
- Create family rituals that promote connection
- Be a good listener
- Maintain empathy and emotional support



"He used to be an avid golfer, but he hasn't been able to do that lately and it's made him depressed. I have been trying to remind him that just because he can't play a full round of golf doesn't mean that he and I can't do similar things like hitting some balls into a net."

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Balancing Questions and Silence

Ask one or two good probing, sensitive questions, and follow up

Slow down, stay with whatever they are saying

LISTEN
SILENT

Silence can invite beyond our best questions

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"Tell me more.."

"I'd really love to know about your experiences"

"Can we talk about that?"

Often emotions come out with silence

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Reflecting Feelings

Lets the person know that you are aware of how they are feeling

- Can encourage emotional expression
- Should include only what you hear clearly stated
- Does not involve probing, interpreting, or speculating



Paraphrasing

Does not involve changing, modifying, or adding to the message

- Demonstrates that you have accurately heard what the person said
- Allows the person to confirm that you are correct or provide additional clarification

Reflection and Paraphrasing

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Reflective Comments


"It sounds like..."


"From what you're saying, I can see how you would be..."


"It sounds like you're saying..."


"You seem really..."



Make sure your reflections are correct by using sentences like:

"Tell me if I'm wrong ... it sounds like you ..."
"Am I right when I say that you ..."

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Supportive Comments

"No wonder you feel..."

"It sounds really hard..."

"It sounds like you're being hard on yourself..."

"It is such a tough thing to go through something like this."

"I'm really sorry this is such a tough time for you."

"We can talk more later if you'd like..."

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Empowering Comments / Questions



"What have you done in the past to make yourself better when things got difficult?"



"Are there any things that you think would help you to feel better?"



"I have an information sheet with some ideas about how to deal with difficult situations....maybe there is an idea or two here that might be helpful for you."



"People can be very different in what helps them to feel better. When things got difficult for me, it helped me to..... Would something like that work for you?"

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Don't:

Probe for details or insist that the person must talk

Rush to tell the person that they will be okay, that they should "move on" or that they should "look for the silver lining"

Try to make the person feel that they should not feel guilty

Give advice instead of asking the person what works for them

Avoid talking about what is bothering the person because you don't feel that you can handle it

Daydream about or discuss your own personal experiences instead of listening

Judge the other person because they aren't coping as well as you think they "should" be

Don'ts for Building a Connection

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Do:

Find an uninterrupted time and place to talk

Show interest, attention, and care

Show respect for individual ways of coping

Talk about reactions that are to be expected, and about healthy ways of coping

Acknowledge that stress can be hard

Be free of expectations or judgments

Help brainstorm positive ways of coping

Convey your belief in their ability to handle what is in front of them

Offer to talk or spend time together as many times as is needed

Do's for Building a Connection

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Stress First Aid: Competence

"I break things down into small steps so she can see her accomplishments and not get overwhelmed. We look at it and talk about it. I remind her that she can accomplish things by taking small steps, and that it's okay to have feelings, but not to let them stop or control her for long."

- Support strategies that help them feel more in control, with a focus on tiny steps, or one step at a time.
- Encourage them to keep on doing what they need to do, to not look too far ahead, and to pace themselves.
- Support them in healthy coping strategies.
- Help them find even small things they can do to get through each day.
- Encourage them to do whatever they can to help keep themselves strong and healthy.



"When she's is fatigued and frustrated by work, but still wants to contribute at home, I give her something to do that contributes but is calming, like brushing the dog."

I tell her it's okay to be frustrated that she can't do more at home but to remember she's part of something bigger.

I'll say, "Let's not worry about home tasks as much now. Today we will not worry about that. Let's adjust expectations and just do what we can."

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Stress First Aid: Confidence

"I try to build his confidence up. I try to show him that his family is a mirror for all the good stuff he's done in the world. I try to keep him from dwelling on what sucks. When he feels guilt, "I could've done this or that," I try to remind him who he is. I try to be as calm, non-judgmental, loving and supportive as possible. I do a lot of redirecting. There is not a lot you can do if you're bogged down."

- Try to find the best ways for the person to talk.
- If they are stuck in unhelpful thoughts or beliefs, try to help them gain a more helpful perspective on how they are viewing themselves or others.
- Remind them that they're part of something bigger may help.
- Help them to focus on what is going well, what they're grateful for, how they're getting stronger, or how they can be inspired by those around them.
- Help them see what meaning their experiences hold for them or highlight their strengths and core values.
- If losses happen, find ways to make meaning and honor the loss. Help them express their feelings and help them to honor or make sense of the loss in whatever way is possible.
- If relevant, support any ways that church / religion / faith / prayer could help them.



Surprise Caravan For LI Nurse Recovering From COVID-19

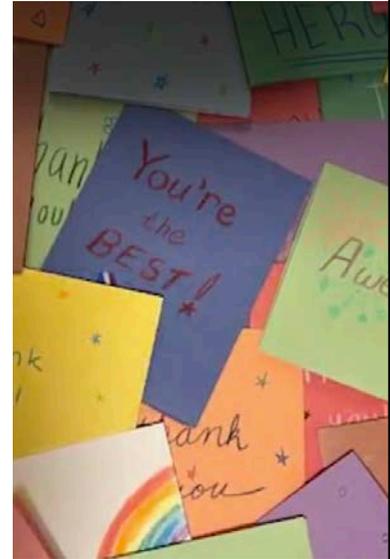


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Cover Self-Care Examples: More Helpful Self-Care Thoughts

- "Taking a break from this work will help me be more effective."
- "Even though I feel fine I need to pace myself."
- "I can better care for others if I also attend to my needs."
- "I'm doing enough."
- "I can contribute the most by pacing myself."
- "Letting someone know how affected I am can help me."
- "I can trust that others can fill in when it's necessary."



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Stress First Aid: Coordinate

- While the preceding actions may be all that is needed to support someone during adverse events, **Coordinate** with others if you need additional assistance.
- There are many possible options for coordinating with others:
 - Get the opinion of other family member or friends.
 - Find resources that might be helpful if you have concerns and feel you are not able to provide them enough support.
 - Find creative ways to get them support, such as reaching out to an old friend, family member, supportive mentor or coworker, or a professional.
 - Consider different avenues of professional support, such as online or telehealth, if flexibility is needed.
 - It may help to interview professionals to get a sense of how they can help.



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