A NOTE TO MANAGERS

The corresponding Tip Sheet, ‘Anniversary Reactions to Black Saturday - continually building resilience’, is a reminder to everyone that anniversaries of trauma can resurface some of the same reactions experienced immediately after the event. Individuals may relive their memories, thoughts and dreams about the event they won’t be able to switch off. They can be just as vivid and real as at the time of the event.

Although these thoughts, feelings, and reactions can be very upsetting, it helps to understand that it is normal to have strong reactions to a disaster or traumatic event and its devastation many months later. Recovery from a traumatic event takes time, but as noted above, with patient understanding and support people can recover and emerge even stronger. This support is particularly important to be shown by manager/ leaders.

It is a good reminder that, as part of our duty of care we need to be aware of our employees’ psychological health and act appropriately to reduce risk in the workplace. So what can managers do to fulfil their responsibility for their staff’s overall health at work, in these situations? The following key components of psychological first aid are useful as a checklist for an organisational response that is aimed at reducing risk and improving the health of your employees.

1. Monitor staff reactions and well-being

Just as can be seen following the trauma, during the anniversary time Managers should not be surprised by some people’s reactions and need to look out for warning signals such as:

- Sleep difficulties
- Expressions of extreme feelings of guilt or shame
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Unusual worry or anxiety
- Lack of concentration or unusual memory lapses
- Abuse of alcohol/ drugs
- Recurrent and intrusive recollections of the event
- Unusual detachment from others
- Unplanned absences.

It is useful to check the extent to which it is different from their normal pattern.
2. **Provide practical and emotional support**

Managers or Team Leaders need to personally check with the person regarding their concerns and their need for support. It is useful to ask what form this support would take. As they are emotionally stretched, they may be worrying about their job performance or even about losing their job.

This important step involves reassuring them and, to the extent that this is practical, to reduce their workload or their expectations for a defined period of time. Support is best shown by personal contact, by listening and giving them permission to express their feelings and experiences, and by respecting their own individual way of dealing with the emotions.

3. **Access to professional counselling**

The employees need to be aware of how they contact a professional if they would like to talk through their experiences and check their reactions. The easiest way of achieving this is to provide them an EAP wallet card or at least a phone number.

4. **If concerned – access Manager Assist**

If in doubt or if any of the above behaviours are observed, Managers can either call the Manager Assist lint to discuss the situation and plan the best approach to help the employee concerned.

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