

LEADING THROUGH CHANGE

MANAGING TEAMS IN THE FACE OF CHANGE



Objectives



- Understand common individual, team-level, and organization-level stressors
- Gain tools for fostering resiliency among your teams in the face of these stressors
- Strengthen communication skills to enhance teamwork and stay connected with employees
- Learn strategies for effectively boosting morale

Phases of Disaster

EMOTIONAL HIGHS



Honeymoon
COMMUNITY COHESION

Heroic

Reconstruction
A NEW BEGINNING

Pre-disaster

Disillusionment

Warning

Threat

Impact

Setback

Inventory

Working Through Grief
COMING TO TERMS

Anniversary Reactions

Trigger Events

EMOTIONAL LOWS

UP TO ONE YEAR

AFTER ANNIVERSARY

Source: Zunin/Meyers, as cited in Training Manual for Mental Health and Human Service Workers in Major Disasters, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000).

Increased Stressors= RISKS FOR TEAMS

Individual and Work-Life Stressors

Personal Concerns

Overwork and fatigue

Concerns about family/friends/community

Social isolation

Team-Level Stressors

Heightened consequences of mistakes

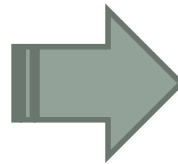
New or unfamiliar procedures

More work/Less Staff

Organization-Level Stressors

Insufficient resources

Financial stress



Risk Points for Teams

Low belief the team can succeed

Narrowing of attention & self focus

Discomfort with speaking up

'Us' versus 'them' dynamics

Low team resilience

Source: Tannenbaum SI, et al. BJM Qual Saf 2020; 0:1. doi: 10.1136/bmjqs-2020-011447

Individual and work-life stressors: What leaders need to know

Employees may experience a wide range of feelings related to the change(s):

- Fear and worry about their own well-being.
- Stress from the “unknown.”
- Overwhelm with procedural changes, increase in workload, and staff shortages.
- Grief and loss (grieving the way things used to be)
- Sadness, anger, or frustration
- Guilt about not being able to perform normal roles & duties to their standards.
- Loneliness and isolation.
- Other emotional or mental health changes.

Leaders should be aware of the potential effects, be able to identify employees who are struggling, and have resources ready to help.

Stress Symptoms



Physical Reactions

- Nausea, Gastrointestinal distress
- Sweating, shivering
- Faintness, dizziness
- Muscle tremors, weakness
- Elevated heartbeat, respiration, blood pressure
- Uncoordinated movements
- Overwhelmed
- Extreme fatigue, exhaustion
- Headache
- Narrowed visual field



Emotional Reactions

- Numbness, anxiety, fear
- Rapidly shifting emotions
- Guilt, survivor guilt
- Exhilaration, survivor joy
- Anger, sadness
- Helplessness, feeling detachment
- Feeling unreal
- Disorientation
- Feeling out of control
- Denial, constriction of feelings
- Strong identification with victims



Cognitive Reactions

- Difficulty concentrating
- Racing, circular thoughts
- Slowed thinking
- Memory problems
- Confusion, difficulty naming objects
- Impaired problem-solving, calculations
- Difficulty making decisions
- Intrusive images of disaster
- Loss of perspective
- Loss of ability to conceptualize, prioritize



Behavioral Reactions

- Startled reaction, restlessness
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Difficulty expressing oneself
- Constant talking
- Arguments, angry outbursts
- Withdrawal and apathy
- Exaggerated “gallows” humor
- Slowed reactions, accident prone
- Inability to rest or let go
- Increased use of alcohol and tobacco

Invite employees to share their challenges and concerns

- Establish consistent check-ins with employees
- Ask open-ended questions that solicit more information

“What, if anything, would be helpful for me to know about the challenges you’re facing?”

“How are you feeling about the changes we’ve implemented?”

“In what ways can I best support you during this time?”

Listen and respond: Focus on empathy and flexibility

- Acknowledge that times are tough.
- Help employees focus on what they CAN control.
- When possible, offer flexibility

“I know this is a really hard time.”

“Our team will get through this together. We’re here for you.”

“I really appreciate everything you’re doing at work and recognize how difficult it is to get the work done under these conditions.”

Managing teamwork in the face of change

Risk point: Narrowing
of attention and over
focus on self.

Recommendation:
Communicate often,
helping team members
understand how their
roles are
interconnected.



Communicate more than ever

- Information is powerful: it reduces emotional distress caused by the unknown; it provides tactical guidance; and it fosters confidence in leadership.
- Express in clear terms how operations have changed.
- Prepare employees to be flexible: operational procedures will be continuously fine-tuned



Managing teamwork in the face of change

Risk point: Uncertainty or doubt that the team can succeed.

Recommendation: Recognize and communicate wins and successes – large and small. Share success stories across teams.

“We start each meeting with a round of appreciation. One person volunteers to go first, pointing out something someone else on the team did to help them out. Other staff members join in. It’s a great way to set the tone early and often that we’re all in this together and can get the work done.” --Jacklyn, Manager

Managing teamwork in the face of change

Risk point: Discomfort with speaking up.



Recommendation: Take actions that build and sustain psychological safety

- validate how challenging the situation is
- acknowledge where you can improve
- admit when you have questions
- thank others when they participate, admit a mistake, or offer a dissenting view

Managing teamwork in the face of change

Risk point: ‘Us’ versus ‘them’ dynamics

Recommendation: Remember the people behind the scenes and acknowledge the contributions of those in supporting roles.

When managing a combination of remote staff and on-site staff, keep the focus on *different yet equal*.

Ask yourself, “*What can I do as a leader to help my staff experience equity?*”

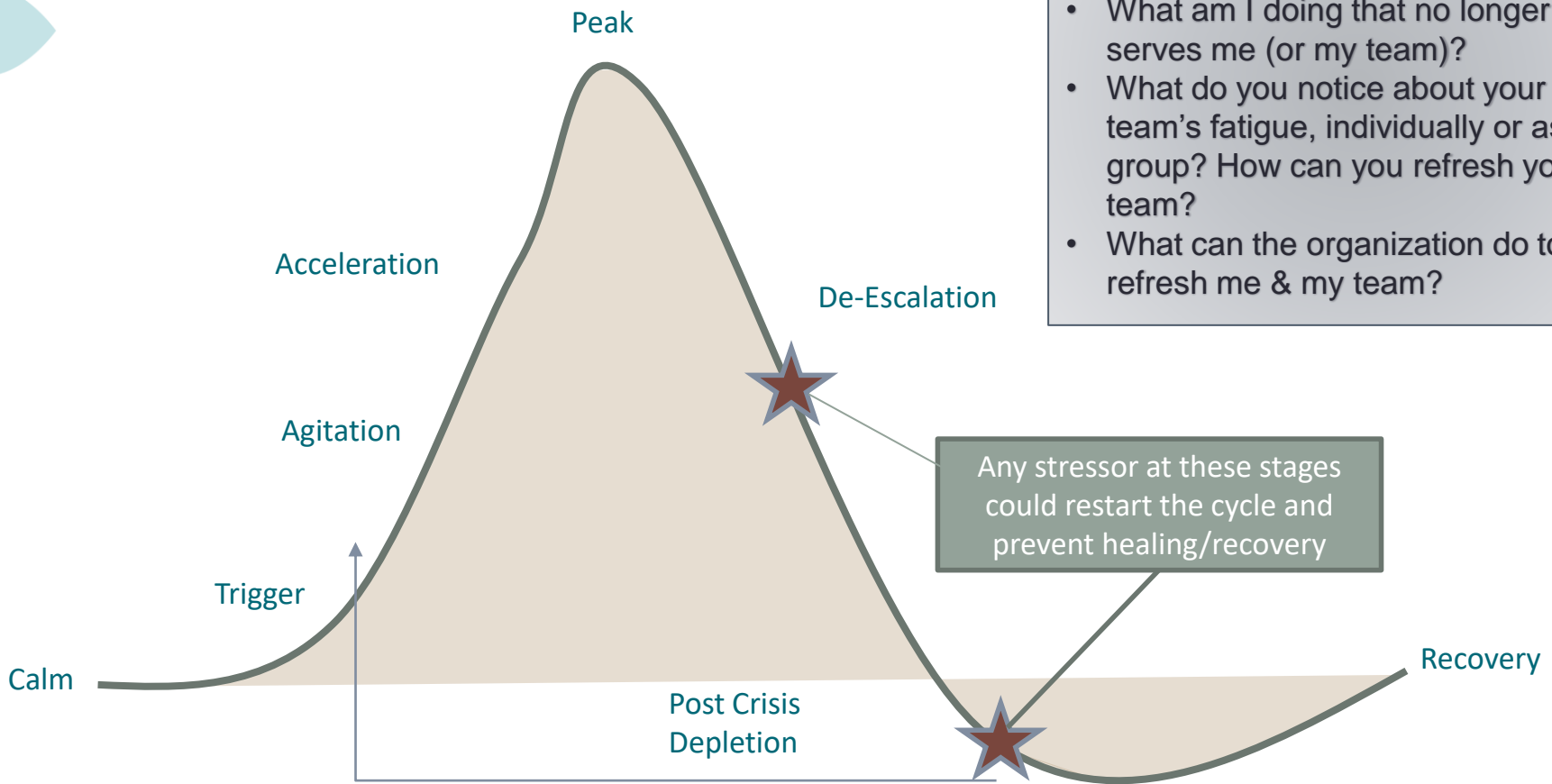
Managing teamwork in the face of change

Risk point: Low team resilience and low morale

Recommendation: Intentionally build team resilience.

- Anticipate, plan for and attempt to address stressors and likely setbacks.
- Quickly identify what isn't working and encourage adaptations.
- Apologize for dysfunctional behaviors that occurred under stress.
- Seek input for non-monetary morale boosting ideas.

Reflect, Refresh, Recalibrate



Reflection:

- What's one way to refresh myself?
- What can I stop doing?
- What am I doing that no longer serves me (or my team)?
- What do you notice about your team's fatigue, individually or as a group? How can you refresh your team?
- What can the organization do to refresh me & my team?

Review

- Change may exacerbate individual-level stressors, team-level stressors, and organization-level stressors
- Be aware of how those stressors may be impacting your staff
- Intentionally build and sustain psychological safety, encouraging participation
- Communicate early and often, checking in regularly with individuals and with the team



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Scan QR code to complete our training survey.



1-800-769-9819



StrengthenME@northernlight.org



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Seek help

Reach out to professional resources such as clergy, medical, and behavioral health professionals.

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