Reassuring Your Team During Uncertain Times

Communicating in the face of uncertainty is an ongoing leadership responsibility that's only increased over the last few years. A large part of anxiety comes from a sense of what we think we should be able to control but can't; you or your employees may feel helpless about what might happen or a general sense of unease and high stress.

It's normal to occasionally feel on edge, helpless, sad, or anxious; for those who already struggle with mental wellness, they might feel more depressed or less motivated to carry out our daily activities. **Remind yourself and your team that we are not helpless and we are not meant to do this alone**. We can always choose our response. If they are struggling, here are some talking points to include in department communications or 1:1 discussions:

1. ***Separate what is in your control from what is not.*** There are things you *can* do and it's helpful to focus on those. Start some spring cleaning and involve your whole family. Take your vitamins. **Take 5-minute breaks for fresh air every day.** Limit your consumption of news to protect your own mental energy. Ask for help when you need it.

2. ***Do what helps you feel a sense of safety*.** This will be different for everyone, and it's important not to compare yourself to others. It's okay if you've decided what makes you feel safe is to limit attendance of large social events, for example, but make sure you are carving out time for other connections with loved ones. **People need people.**

3. ***Get outside in nature–and keep movement in your life.*** The biggest benefits of regular time in nature, according to research, is a **lasting boost in mental and physical health**. Many people experience nature as regenerative, and the enjoyment of natural beauty tends to lift you out of yourself. Exercise also helps both you holistically. Inclement weather? Find a free yoga video online or do some basic stretching and move around the house.

4. ***Challenge yourself to stay in the present.*** Perhaps your worry is compounding—you are not only thinking about what is currently happening, but also projecting into the future. When you find yourself worrying about something that hasn't happened, **gently bring yourself back to the present moment**. Notice the sights, sounds, tastes and other sensory experiences in your immediate moment and name them. **Notice "what is"**, not "what if." Engaging in mindfulness activities is one way to help stay grounded when things feel beyond your control.

5. ***Stay connected and reach out if you need more support.*** Talk to trusted friends about what you are feeling. If you are feeling particularly anxious or if you are struggling with your mental health, it's okay to reach out to a mental health professional for support. You don't have to be alone with your worry and it can be comforting to share what you are experiencing with those trained to help.

Communicating with Employees During a Crisis

HR professionals and management teams know that communicating quickly, often, and well with employees is often the most important task they have during a crisis. Employees will be one of the biggest determinants in how fast and how well an organization recovers from a emergency situation, and they'll be the first contact with your customers as recovery occurs.

Your employees will be much more likely to show up in a team-oriented, willing way to work if you handle the communication in a swift and transparent way.

Tips for Communicating with Employees During a Crisis

1. **Be proactive.** Have some templates ready for employee communication, even if it's simply "We realize this is a major source of concern for many of you; we're gathering resources and will be back in touch as soon as we have more information."

2. **Get a team together now**. Which employees will make up the crisis management team? These people will plan together and know what to do if a disaster or emergency strikes.

3**. Reach out to them; don't wait for them to ask you.** Implement a notification system (text or email) or build a company intranet page to proactively provide employees with expert information and guidance.

4. **Don't put up roadblocks.** Social media is ubiquitous; instead of discouraging online posts, help them shape their messages by giving them correct information in a timely manner. Set a good example by providing expert, vetted fact sheets and posters on your company's social media.

5. **Act fast—but only say what you know to be true.** If you don't know all the details yet, say so. Speed is often of the essence but should never come at the price of accuracy.

6. **Don't go silent.** If your organization is not yet ready to respond to an emergency, HR should at least let staffers know that the organization is gathering information and will follow up as soon as it can.

7. **Test—then test again.** At least once a year, test the information flow within and from the crisis communications team, and find out from workers what works and what doesn't.

8. **Don't stop talking once the crisis ends.** Example: "Based on how the crisis affected you and your department and what you're hearing from your community, how can we make communications better next time?"

Taking Care of Yourself in the Small Moments



1 Know the Symptoms

Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand or threat.

What other symptoms do you notice that may relate to stress?

- Tension & irritability
- Fear & anxiety
- Sleep problems
- Loss of appetite
- Trouble concentrating
- Stomach problems
- Anger & confusion
- Headaches & body aches



2 Learn Your Triggers

A number of factors can cause stress. **Learning what's stressful to you can help reduce your daily discomfort.**

Take a moment to acknowledge your own stressors.

- Increased workload
- Family tension
- A general sense of unease
- A lot of changes at once
- Personal matters interfering with work
- Less time for your own care



3 Shrink Your Stress

Exercises and healthy habits can help you reduce tension and relax.

Discover which stress-relievers work best for you.

RELAX & RELEASE

- **Breathe in, then out for 10 full seconds.**
- **Release your muscles as you breathe.**
- **Focus your breathing on a simple word or phrase.**

GET PHYSICAL

- Stretch your arms, legs and neck.
- Write down 3 things that make you smile.
- Take a walk outside or around your work area.

STAY PRESENT

- Take a real lunch break and read a book or magazine.
- Leave work at the workplace.
- Call or video with family and friends after work.
- Spend time with your pet.

Want to talk about it?

Are you feeling impacted by the layers of change going on in your world? We're here to help.

Call **866-660-9533** to get a referral to a counselor or resources *(toll-free and 24/7)*

www.investeap.org
org password:

We take your privacy seriously. All of our services and supports are entirely **confidential and free** for anyone in your household.

INVEST EAP



Check in

The first thing to know right now: it's **completely normal** to be experiencing a wide range of emotions.

Accepting your feelings is an important first step to building resilience. The simple act of naming your emotions has been found to benefit overall wellbeing. So, we invite you to take a moment now to tune into your body and notice how you're feeling.

Circle the emotions below that you identify with. You are welcome to add in other emotions that better represent the way you feel.

20 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- How am I feeling right now?
- Is the stress in my life accumulating from a lack of play?
- What is the most loving and supportive thing I can do for myself right now?
- Is there a boundary I need to communicate?
- When I listen to my body, what does it need?
- In what ways am I avoiding my truth?
- Can I do this on my own? If not, where can I turn?
- What can I do to take care of myself today?
- I'm excited to focus on...
- What am I holding onto? And would it be ok to let it go?
- I will create space from...
- What can I forgive myself for?
- Is there someone I can forgive?
- When is the last time I moved my body?
- Have I taken a moment to breathe today?
- What do I like about myself?
- Who am I checking in on or connecting with today?
- What can I do to feel powerful?
- How can I express my gratitude today?
- Am I fighting life or inviting life?

Angry	Sad	Anxious	Hurt	Confused	Thankful	Fed Up	Tearful
Content	Upset	Frustrated	Healthy	Vulnerable	Mournful	Betrayed	Inspired
Lonely	Irritated	Cautious	Nervous	Abandoned	Relieved	Trusting	Bewildered
Skeptical	Deprived	Shocked	Pessimistic	Annoyed	Spiteful	Impatient	Worried
Fill in your own:							

You are welcome to contact Invest EAP to talk through your feelings. Call 1-866-660-9533.

Taking Care of Yourself

There are several ways you can find balance, be aware of your needs, and make connections. Use this list to help you decide which self-care strategies will work for you.

- ❑ Practice brief relaxation techniques during the workday
- ❑ Check in with other colleagues
- ❑ Prepare for worldview changes that may not be mirrored by others in your life
- ❑ Increase leisure activities, stress management, and exercise
- ❑ Pay extra attention to health and nutrition
- ❑ Self-monitor and pace your efforts
- ❑ Maintain boundaries: delegate, say no, and avoid getting overloaded with work
- ❑ Pay extra attention to rekindling close interpersonal relationships
- ❑ Practice good sleep routines
- ❑ Make time for self-reflection
- ❑ Find things that you enjoy or make you laugh
- ❑ Participate in formal help if extreme stress persists for greater than two to three weeks
- ❑ Increase experiences that have spiritual or philosophical meaning to you
- ❑ Keep a journal to get worries off your mind
- ❑ Access support from colleagues routinely by sharing concerns, identifying difficult experiences and strategizing to solve problems
- ❑ Stay aware of limitations and needs
- ❑ Recognize when one is Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired (HALT), and taking the appropriate self-care measures
- ❑ Increase activities that are positive
- ❑ Practice religious faith, philosophy, spirituality
- ❑ Spend time with family and friends
- ❑ Learn how to “put stress away”
- ❑ Write, draw, paint
- ❑ Limit caffeine and substance use

Think of self-care as having three basic aspects:

Awareness	The first step is to seek awareness. This requires you to slow down and focus inwardly to determine how you are feeling, what your stress level is, what types of thoughts are going through your head, and whether your behaviors and actions are consistent with who you want to be.
Balance	The second step is to seek balance in all areas of your life including work, personal and family life, rest, and leisure. You will be more productive when you’ve had opportunities to rest and relax. Becoming aware of when you are losing balance in your life gives you an opportunity to change.
Connection	The final step is connection. It involves building connections and supportive relationships with your co-workers, students, friends, family, and community. One of the most powerful stress reducers is social connection.