

Self CARE

One of the first steps in learning to take care of yourself is to recognize your own **signs of stress**. Pay attention to these signals:

Physical:

Stomach problems
Headache
Backache
Loss of Appetite
Sleeplessness
Exhaustion

Emotional:

Irritability
Anxiety
Confusion
Lethargy
Apprehension
Impatience

Behavioral:

Overly critical of others
Waking in the middle of the night
Reacting without thinking
Procrastinating
Aggressiveness
Forgetfulness

Taking Care of Yourself

During activation it can be challenging to remember and to find the time to take care of yourself. Below are some ideas to keep in mind that might help.

Exercise (or at least stretch)

Exercise releases adrenaline and toxins that build up in your body.

Eat nutritious foods

Avoid salt, sugar, caffeine, fat, and alcohol. Eat food that is not going to upset your stomach or give you a headache. Drink liquids such as water or apple juice.

Get adequate rest

If you do not rest, your body will break down on the third or fourth day. If there's no time for sleep, try to at least sit still and close your eyes.

Ask for help when needed

Make sure that you know your limits and that you find support when needed.

Don't take others' frustration personally

Emergency situations can bring out the worst in people. Try not to be too thin skinned.

Keep a daily journal

Writing down your feelings and experiences is a healthy way to manage and process your emotions. Physiologically your blood pressure actually lowers when you write your feelings down.

Find a Support Link or buddy

Finding someone to connect with on a daily basis can be very helpful. Having a buddy who has gone through the same experience not only validates your own feelings, it also gives you someone to be accountable to during the response.

Call home daily

Not only is it important for your family at home to feel included, it also keeps you grounded by reminding you that there's a world outside the non-stop grief you are involved in.

Nutrition

Responding to an emergency depletes nutrients and puts extra strain on our bodies. During a stressful time it's common to neglect eating because:

1. There are too many things to be done
2. Adrenaline masks normal appetite signals
3. Food supply may be disrupted

To sustain your energy it's important to remember to:

- Eat regularly, even if you're not hungry
- Eat four to five times a day in small amounts to provide a more constant energy level
- Carry high energy snacks with you, such as dried fruits, nuts, or granola bars
- Drink plenty of fluids; water or juice
- Avoid caffeine, processed sugar, salt, and fat
- Avoid drinking alcohol
- Use a good vitamin or mineral supplement
- Eat in a calm atmosphere with a friend or co-worker and agree not to discuss the accident during the meal.



Emotional Support

The following support services are available to you at any time:

CIRP

The Critical Incident Response Program for Alaska and Horizon offers peer support to employees who have experienced a traumatic or stressful event. A traumatic event is any event that is so emotionally significant that it affects our ability to function or do our jobs.

Talking about the incident with some guidance from a CIRP volunteer assists a person in processing the incident further to avoid lingering anxiety or other symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. PTSD is caused by a person's inability to "get over it." This is not a flaw in the person, simply a signal that they need help.

For your own emotional well being, either one-on-one or group de-briefings will be mandatory for all activated CARE Team members. De-briefings may be conducted daily and will be required prior to leaving the accident site, if applicable, and when you are released from your CARE assignment.

AS employees call: 1-800-225-7887

QX employees call: 1-888-341-7717

The Critical Incident Response Program is available year round, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

EAP / Lifeworks

Alaska Airlines offers you access to LifeWorks & Lifeworks Online, where you can find help to cope with life's little -- and not so little -- issues. Click on a topic from within their website that is of interest, under the "How May We Help You?" heading and you can access informative articles, helpful tools, audio tips on hundreds of specific topics, and much more.

Support Link

Finding a Support Link involves pairing up with another employee to ensure you have emotional support before, during, and after an accident.

It involves...

- Regularly sharing and validating your feelings and reactions with a partner.
- Keeping each other informed about special meetings, debriefs, and other pertinent information.
- Keeping an eye out for unusual stress or reactions in each other.
- Maintaining contact with each other after the assignment has concluded.

How it works...

- As soon as you report for duty, ask someone to be your buddy.
- Keep in daily contact with your buddy, when at work and at home.
- Get to know your buddy so that you can tell if they are experiencing unusual symptoms of stress or trauma.
- Keep in touch with your buddy after the response is over. Talking with a friend who has gone through the same experience validates your feelings gives you the chance to discuss emotions and to process what you have been through.

Post Activation Response

Possible positive and negative aspects of being involved in an emergency response are:

Positive:

- Opportunity to use initiative and creativity
- Professional growth, learning, and use of leadership skills
- Excitement and stimulation
- Development of new professional and social relationships
- Increased sense of community, identity, and importance
- Self-confidence and renewed courage
- Participation in a life-changing, significant event

Negative:

- Traumatic shock
- Identification with the survivors' loss and pain
- Feelings of inadequacy due to inability to do more
- Frustration with procedural difficulties
- Separation from family and friends
- Fatigue and exhaustion

Returning Home

Possible reactions on returning home might include any of the following:

Disappointing reunion

Family members might resent your extended absence or expect you to pick up where you left off. Keep expectations realistic.

Isolation

Family and friends can't fully comprehend the magnitude of what you have experienced. Call a team member or talk with a counselor if you need to.

Impatience with Trivialities

Issues that were previously crucial can now seem insignificant. Be patient with others who don't share your view of what's important.

Mood Swings

Explain to friends and family that although you may display emotional extremes for a while, things will normalize.

Flashbacks

Emotional memories of the trauma can be triggered during daily activities. This is common and will decrease in intensity with time.

Communication Challenges

Family, friends, and co-workers may pressure you to talk about details before you are ready. Or you may want to talk more than they want to listen. Be patient with yourself and others. Use your support link to discuss your experiences if needed.

The Four Stages of Transition

After duties are completed there are usually four stages in the transition back to daily life:

1. An ending, involving loss and letting go
2. A period of confusion and distress
3. A time of working through and making sense of the feelings
4. A new beginning

Deactivation

If at any time you decide that you are unable to perform your CARE Team duties, please do not hesitate to deactivate. Your request will be kept confidential and honored without question.

If you wish to deactivate, contact your CARE Team Coordinator to make arrangements. You must speak with a Critical Incident Response Team peer or a FEI Behavioral Health representative prior to leaving the accident location.