

Stress First Aid: A
Stress Resilience
Model for Self
and Peer Support

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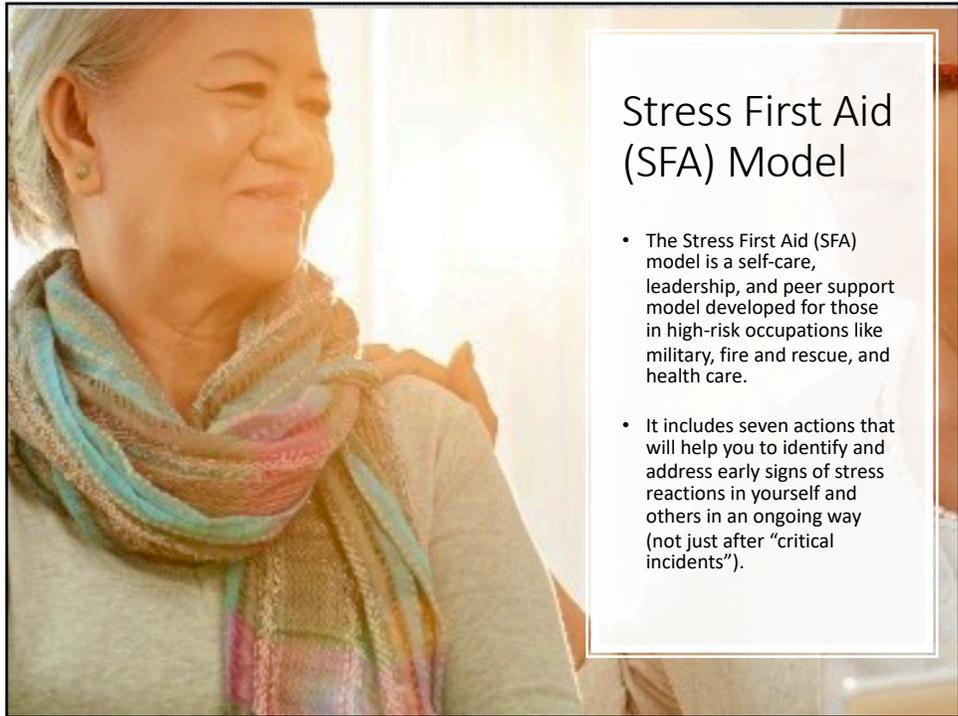


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Factors in
Recovery
From
Adversity
and Stress



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Stress First Aid (SFA) Model

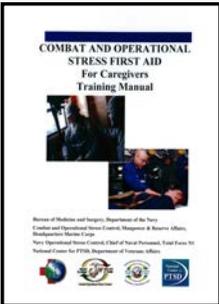
- The Stress First Aid (SFA) model is a self-care, leadership, and peer support model developed for those in high-risk occupations like military, fire and rescue, and health care.
- It includes seven actions that will help you to identify and address early signs of stress reactions in yourself and others in an ongoing way (not just after “critical incidents”).

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Stress First Aid Adaptations



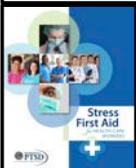




The first SFA model, Combat Operational Stress First Aid (COSFA), developed for Marines Corps and Navy personnel, has been adapted for:

- Fire / EMS Professionals
- Rail workers
- Wildland Firefighters
- Law Enforcement Professionals
- Pretrial / Probation Officers
- Healthcare Workers





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Double Edged Sword of Values and Ideals

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

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Reasons for Stress First Aid

Acute Stress	Chronic Stress	Cost / Longevity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-lived • Might interfere with safety or functioning in the moment • What you feel after a fatal or other difficult case • Once the situation is resolved, it diminishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term burn out • Might be the result of traumatic or loss events or other ongoing situations • Feelings may not have been dealt with and chronic stress remains • Chronic physical health conditions linked to stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowered morale or absenteeism/presenteeism • Increased turnover of employees due to burn out • Increased costs associated with hiring and training new employees due to turnover

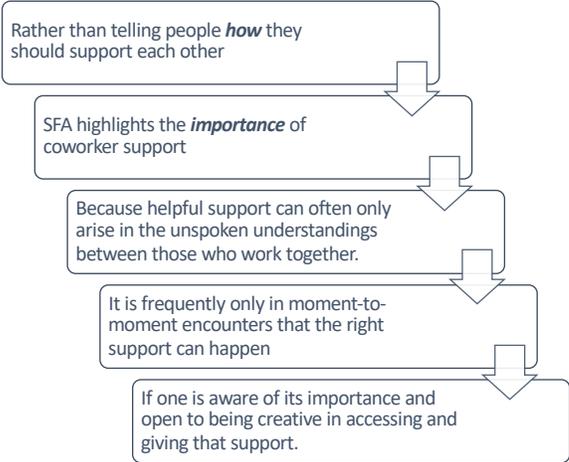
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Why is it Hard to Implement Solutions?

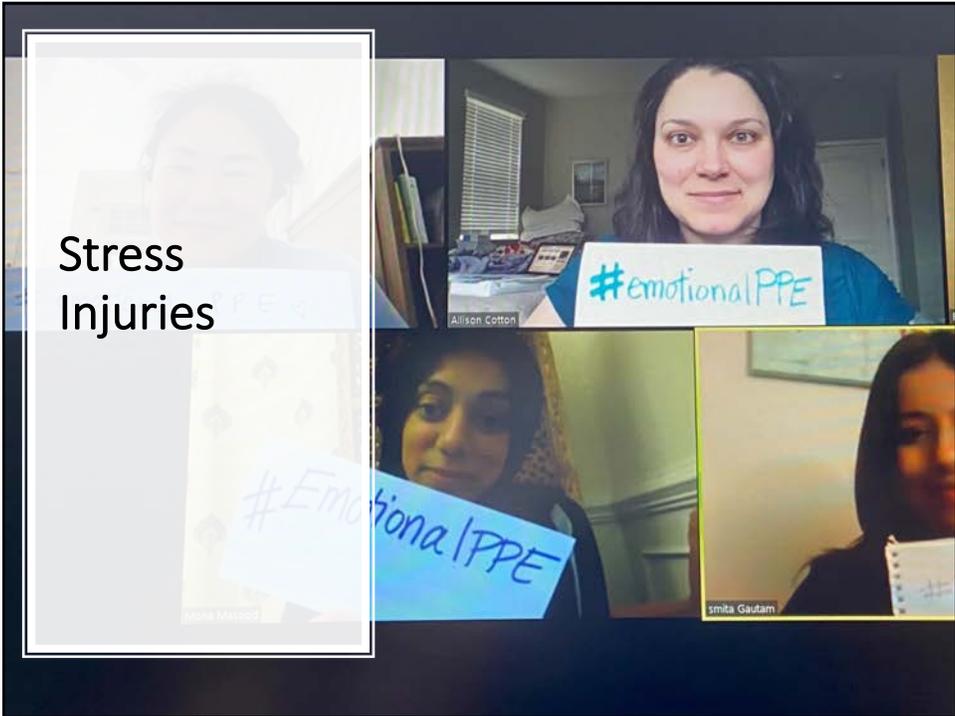


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How is Stress First Aid Different?



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Four Causes of Stress Injury

Trauma	Loss	Inner Conflict	Wear and Tear
A traumatic injury Due to the experience of or exposure to intense injury, horrific or gruesome experiences, or death.	A grief injury Due to the loss of people, things or parts of oneself.	A moral injury Due to behaviors or the witnessing of behaviors that violate moral values.	A fatigue injury Due to the accumulation of stress from all sources over time without sufficient rest and recovery.

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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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma • Loss • Moral injury • Wear and tear <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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Orange Zone Indicators



To recognize those who need help, look for the three *Orange Zone Indicators*:

- Recent Stressor Events
- Distress
- Changes in Functioning

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Signs and Symptoms of Stress Injuries



Signs (Noted by Others)

Significant and persistent change in behavior or appearance:

- Not talking
- Isolating
- Anger outbursts
- Increased use of Substances
- Making mistakes



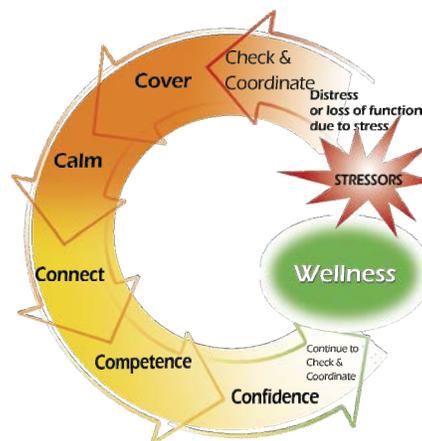
Symptoms (Felt by Person)

Not feeling in control of one's body, emotions or thinking:

- Numb
- Disconnected
- Short fuse
- Can't calm down or sleep
- Can't function as well at work or in relationships

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STRESS FIRST AID MODEL

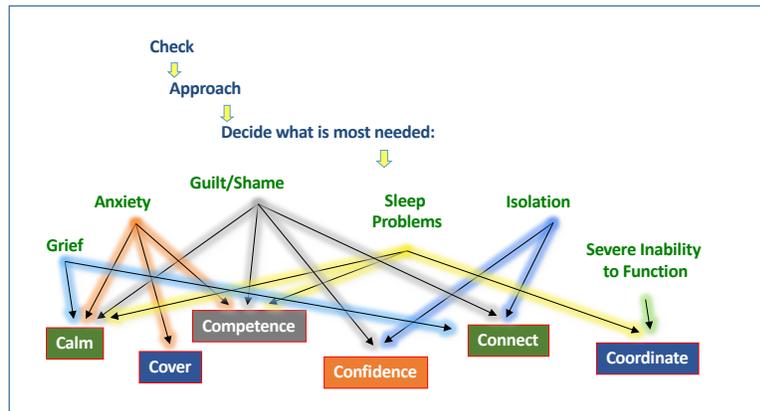


Seven Cs of Stress First Aid:

- 1. CHECK**
Assess, observe and listen
- 2. COORDINATE**
Get help, refer as needed
- 3. COVER**
Get to safety ASAP
- 4. CALM**
Relax, slow down, refocus
- 5. CONNECT**
Get support from others
- 6. COMPETENCE**
Restore effectiveness
- 7. CONFIDENCE**
Restore self-esteem and hope

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How Can You Use SFA?



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Characteristics of Stress First Aid



- Flexibility and “tiny steps” are emphasized
- Timing and context are important
- Mentoring and problem solving are highlighted
- Bridging to higher care is recommended when indicated

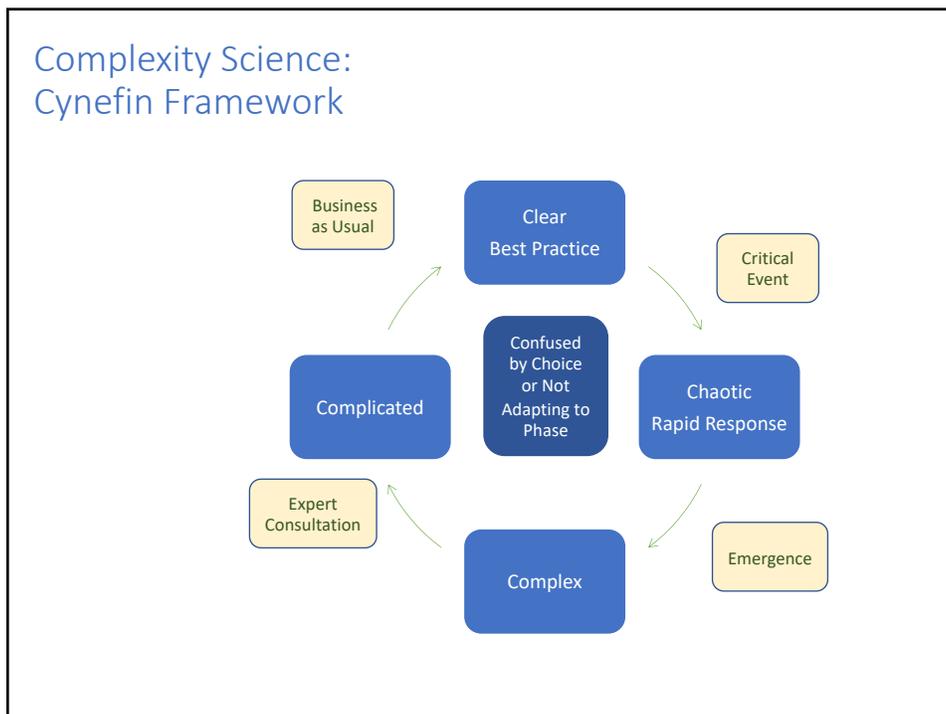
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COVID-19: Some Differences

- Scale: Affecting everyone, no safe zones
- Ongoing threat, continuing worries and fears
- Physical isolation interfering with connections
- Strangeness, unfamiliarity, hypervigilance
 - Room for imagination to run wild
 - Increased attention to bodily sensations, personal safety
 - Unfamiliar situation with staying home
- Increased impact of information
 - Overwhelming, extended, coverage, often with substantial delays
 - Information is the central stressor, received in fragmented, contradictory doses, with potential misinformation
- Helpers under threat as well

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The Chaotic Context of a Pandemic: Cynefin Framework

Wellbeing requires:

- Responding to ever-changing contexts.
- A “lessons learning” approach.
- Enhanced communication, flexibility.
- Modified expectations and patience.
- Staying present, centered and grounded in fluid conditions.
- Continuously re-assessing, experimenting, tolerating failure, and remaining creative.

Snowden, D. (2005)

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Intolerance of Uncertainty

- Individuals may struggle to distinguish ‘unsafe’ or threatening situations from ‘objectively-safe-but-unknown’ situations.
- Uncertainty-reducing behaviors might take the form of:
 - *Over-engagement* (over planning, preparation, trying to predict a range of possible outcomes)
 - *Under-engagement* (avoiding preparing for something or not turning up to an event to reduce uncertainty-related discomfort)
 - *Impulsivity* (avoiding uncertainty and acting impulsively).

Mofrad, Tiplady, Payne, &
Freeston, 2020

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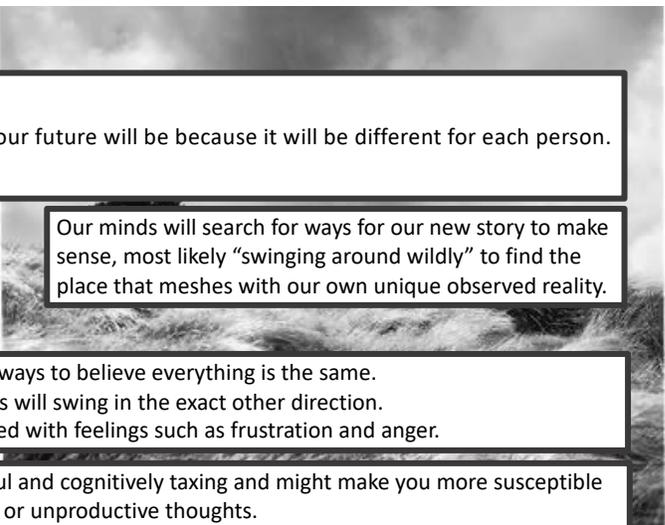


Making Friends With Uncertainty

- **Learn your own ‘uncertainty feeling’**
 - Experiment with uncertainty (change a routine or experiment with something new).
- **Begin to find ways to distinguish ‘uncertain’ from ‘unsafe’.**
 - Make changes to behaviors in **‘low stakes’** life areas to show that uncertainty can be safe (e.g. taking a new route to walk the dog).
 - Make changes to more **resource-intensive** uncertainty areas to increase ability to engage with ‘safe uncertainty’ (e.g. go on a day trip to somewhere totally new).
- **Experiment with behaviors linked to your area of concern**
 - Find routines that are feasible in the new context.
 - Give help when you can and accept help when needed.

Mofrad, Tiplady, Payne, & Freeston, 2020

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No one can tell us what our future will be because it will be different for each person.

Dealing with Uncertainty

Our minds will search for ways for our new story to make sense, most likely “swinging around wildly” to find the place that meshes with our own unique observed reality.

- Some days we will find ways to believe everything is the same.
- Other days our thoughts will swing in the exact other direction.
- We may be overwhelmed with feelings such as frustration and anger.

The process can be stressful and cognitively taxing and might make you more susceptible to addiction or to negative or unproductive thoughts.

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Eventually there will be a new version of reality that you can place yourself in. It just takes time to rebuild.

It's a "way-finding process."
It may include overreacting and underreacting, and not being sure which you are doing at any given moment.

We will catch ourselves, and we will rise, because "that's what we do."

A part of the process is sharing and learning from each other.

- Do things to create stability in your life to help better imagine the future.
- Find routines that are feasible and enjoyable within the new context.
- Rely on others and accept help when needed.
- Be weak when you can't be strong and strong when you can.

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What Contributes to Each Zone in a Pandemic?

READY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
<p>Safety: Staying informed Facing facts Setting boundaries</p> <p>Calm: Changing expectations Being patient Keeping balanced</p> <p>Connect: Staying connected</p> <p>Self-Efficacy: Prioritizing what to expend energy on Planning and adapting to current situation Focusing on prevailing Problem solving Making routines Seeking mentoring or training</p> <p>Hope: Living by values Finding gratitude Focusing on faith/religion / philosophy</p>	<p>Not pacing oneself Taking on too much Ignoring drops in functioning Not changing expectations Not checking in Underestimating needs Not adapting self-care Overriding the concern of others Self-medicating Lack of routine Unhelpful thoughts or habits</p>	<p>Lack of attention to chronic yellow zone stress Stuck in unhelpful patterns More disengaged / isolated Overdoing without balance Underdoing what is needed Stigma</p>	<p>Lack of attention to orange zone stress Not seeking help / expertise Engaging in counterproductive behaviors</p>

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Prioritizing Actions Towards the Green Zone			
READY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
<p>Safety: Stay informed Face facts Set boundaries</p> <p>Calm: Change expectations Be patient Keep balanced</p> <p>Connect: Apart But Connected</p> <p>Self-Efficacy: Prioritize what to expend energy on Plan and adapt Focus on prevailing Problem solve Make routines Seek mentoring/training</p> <p>Hope: Live by values Find gratitude Faith / philosophy</p>	<p>Safety: Take a marathon approach Build healthy habits Set boundaries</p> <p>Calm: Be disciplined about taking breaks Identify unhelpful thoughts Practice helpful thoughts Focus on what you can control</p> <p>Connect: Seek specific support</p> <p>Self-Efficacy: Build resilience skills</p> <p>Hope: Make time to reflect Seek mentoring / support</p>	<p>Safety: Get help with setting routines and boundaries</p> <p>Calm: <i>Rest and recuperate</i> <i>Build tiny health habits</i></p> <p>Connect: Ask for targeted or sustained support</p> <p>Self-Efficacy: Identify unhelpful ruts Tackle one issue at a time</p> <p>Hope: Ask for assistance in reframing unhelpful thoughts Remind yourself that you don't need to be perfect</p>	<p>Safety: Make small positive behavior changes</p> <p>Calm: Pause...take a time out Distance from stressor to reduce agitation</p> <p>Connect: Get formal behavioral health treatment Find a mentor</p> <p>Self-Efficacy: Regain lost ground Rehabilitate as you would a physical injury</p> <p>Hope: Reconnect with values</p>

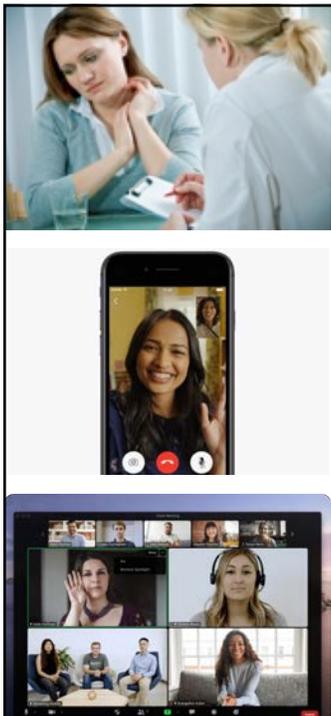
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Why Stress First Aid?



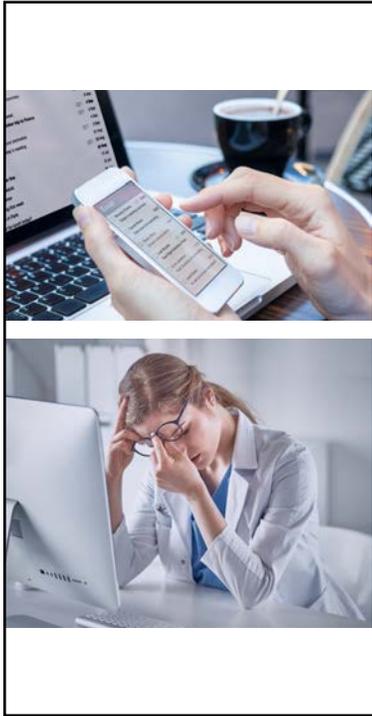
- SFA protects the wellbeing of employees in high stress jobs
- SFA creates a common language to address stress
- SFA addresses stress reactions before they create problems
- SFA can reduce stigma by changing culture
- SFA reduces burnout and turnover
- SFA fosters longevity in the job

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Stress First Aid Actions

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Potential Self-Check Actions

- Give yourself permission to take care of yourself
- Make a conscious effort to keep tabs on yourself
- Become aware of personal red flags
- Pay attention to red flags sooner rather than later

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Potential Coworker Check Actions

- Offer basic resources like food, water, etc.
- Begin with a casual two-way communication to get someone talking.
- Find the right way to check on someone without annoying them (e.g., email/texting versus calling).
- Check in more than once, especially on anniversaries.
- Be approachable and authentic.
- Monitor / check on staff needs regularly.
- Set ground rules.



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Potential Coordinate Actions

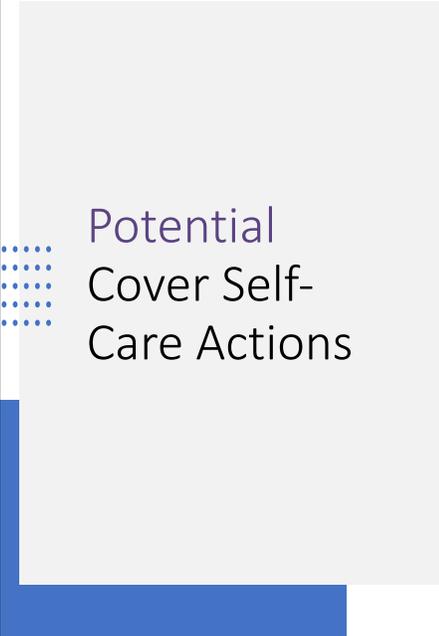
- Coordinate only if needed
- Try to find the most acceptable way to refer someone to EAP or other support, rather than telling them to talk to someone
- Mentor, help problem-solve, and/or normalize help-seeking
- Be aware of local and national resources

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Potential Barrier	Coordinate
You have stress injury that impairs your ability to provide SFA	Get help yourself
You cannot acquire or hold the other person's attention or trust	Involve other leaders, coworkers, trained peers, human resources, chaplains, or mental health providers
You have negative beliefs about the person, or the person actively resists attempts to help	
The person does not get better with SFA actions	

Coordinate helps in overcoming potential barriers to providing or succeeding with SFA

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Potential Cover Self-Care Actions

Actively seek information from trusted sources

- Check with others for reliable sources for information

Making contingency plans for different scenarios

- Several examples of survival guides, checklists and cheat sheets online

“To make myself feel safer, I make contingency plans. I run through what I will do should something happen, for a whole variety of scenarios. It makes me feel better to know I have steps, and a plan, just like fire drills with kids in school. I have the same thing but for so many different scenarios. I just work it out in my head, so I know what to do.”

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<p>Potential Cover Self-Care Actions</p>	<p>Educate loved ones about activities / risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping other understand the challenges you face when you are working • Sharing information with other can also help them better appreciate circumstances they may not be exposed to personally (i.e., exposure to virus while an essential worker) <p>Get help with personal responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is ok to delegate to others including your team members <p>Self-monitor for stress reactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of your warning signs and change things before safety is needed <p>Plan for regular check-ins with coworkers</p>
	

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<p>Potential Cover Actions: Coworker Support</p>	<p>Communicate regularly about changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In practice / strategies / resources / events • Begin each meeting or shift with leader updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In team meetings, discuss plans to utilize common spaces to assure socially distancing possible (e.g., times in break room areas, Communicate regularly and bathrooms) • Distribute succinct information about what, why, and how decisions were made, to reduce confusion • Highlight important updates and specific changes, to offset information overload
	

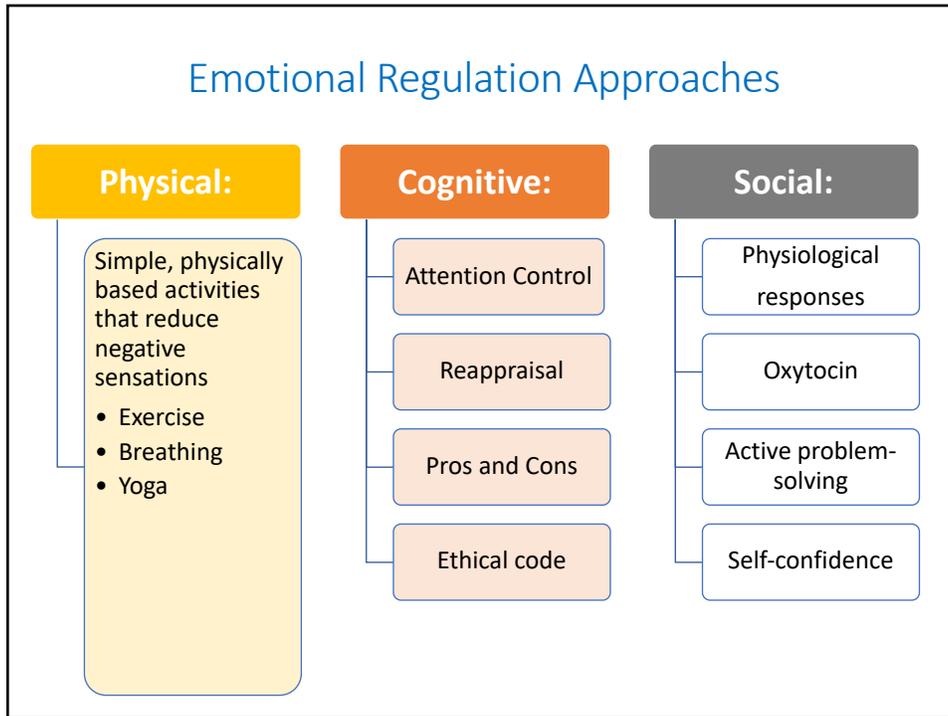
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<p>Potential Cover Actions: Coworker Support</p>	
	<p>Provide information on how you are working to keep employees safe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Proactive</i> plans for how your team can offer support to others • Open communication lines about plans • Processes for teams • Proactive communication with leadership <p>Provide information on keeping oneself safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with staff • Remind about what options are available • Reinforce taking time to step away • Talk about and watch for red flags

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<p>Potential Cover Actions: Coworker Support</p>	
	<p>Elicit needs and suggestions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage staff to share any concerns and/or solutions • Adapt methods for making suggestions for team to ways that work best for staff • Call out good ideas and put them into play when you've solicited employee input <p>Brainstorm and solve problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share staff ideas with upper leadership • Develop plans for teams including emergency planning • Update standard operating procedures with team to help provide structure <p>Reduce anything that makes staff feel unsafe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be available for consultation • Keep informed about any issues that may be causing increased stress and/or a disruption

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Potential Calm Self-Care Actions

Focus on:	Whatever helps you to keep focused on the present moment	
	Being realistic	
	Taking action to reduce stress reactions	
	Acceptance	
	What you're grateful for	
	What you can control	
	Changing beliefs that don't serve you	
	When or how pain temporarily eases	
Prioritize simple strategies to calm down:	Breathing	
	Exercise	
	Yoga	
	Social support	
	Reflection/meditation/yoga/prayer	

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<p>Potential Calm Actions: Coworker Support</p>	<p>Attend to emotional needs/experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect what a person needs in a moment when they're showing strong stress reactions • Show understanding when they're having a stress reaction • Validate their concerns. Say that it is natural to have reactions in situations like this • 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 patient with themselves and others
	<p>Attend to physical needs/experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a collection of self-care/wellness items that staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities for children, board games, books, puzzles, treats, personal cards • If continuing to work in office, set a calming environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower overhead lights, play calming music in public areas, turn rooms into a personal wellness spaces if not in use

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<p>Potential Calm Actions: Coworker Support</p>	<p>Team meetings and decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly check-in formally and informally both individually and in group settings. • Schedule regular team meetings and individual meetings with supervisees or team members. • Allow time for venting and problem solving. Slow down and ask about each individual team member's situation and offer support • Set the tone in staff meetings to openly share reactions, vulnerabilities to encourage others to express themselves appropriately as well • Permit time in each staff meeting for a wellness activity (work with EAP, whole health coordinator, another individual outside of team) • Be flexible about team meeting priorities, give the team time to decide what may be more important for them to speak about during group meetings and plan accordingly • Limit changes to work teams that are not essential
	

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<p>Potential Calm Actions: Coworker Support</p>	<p>Connect staff to resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about resources that might be available to help them get through ongoing stressful situations • Provide time for staff to attend lectures, online trainings and other opportunities to address personal wellness during workday
	<p>Be mindful of self as a leader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to remain calm yourself, be a role model to others by engaging in self-care • Before team meetings, do a breathing exercise or calming exercise to ensure that you are present to the team and share openly struggles about managing this new work/home setting

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<p>Potential Connect Self-Care Actions</p>	<p>Seek out contact and be open to different types of support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to other people in similar positions in other departments or organizations • Identify other program manager peers to connect with both professionally and personally
	<p>Discipline yourself to have conversations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a point to send an email or message someone <p>Reprioritize your schedule</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Schedule” time to connect <p>Find creative ways to engage in social activities or focus on non-work relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texting chains • Zoom social hours • Online group games

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<p>Potential Connect Actions: Coworker Support</p>	<p>Open communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As much as possible keep an “open door” in person or virtually <p>Check in regularly and be creative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize apps for unofficial ways to stay connected • Start team meetings with a review of what is going well and tips that team members want to share with others (e.g., “Thankful Thursdays”) <p>Offer different types of social support (practical, inclusion, emotional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider some levity when appropriate (e.g., themes for team meetings)
	

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<p>Potential Connect Actions: Coworker Support</p>	<p>Promote connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for more connections by permitting all staff to join a huddle or connect with other staff members for both work related and purely social connections • 15-minute morning huddle to check-in on needs for the day • Consider having team member check-in at the start of the day with morning greetings • Keep calling, texting, and talking with co-workers <p>Help problem-solve obstacles to connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage continuing or starting peer consultation groups. If you are the supervisor, consider not attending to provide another space for staff to connect with each other that is not evaluative <p>Assist with connection at all levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a note of support to those in leadership positions above you. Kindness can be contagious, and this may also help open some dialogue
	

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<p>Potential Competence Self- Care Actions</p>	<p>Focus on what is you need most for yourself and your family and re-prioritize</p>
	<p>Learn from others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become part of a mentoring network to share ideas <p>Create routines for yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you're working remotely from home, end your day on time. Plan non-work activity at end of your workday to help transition <p>Be flexible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are taking on new roles realize you don't have to be outstanding at all of them

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<p>Potential Competence Self- Care Actions During Prolonged Stress</p>	<p>Make a commitment to <i>endure</i>, using whatever coping skills work best for you, as well as these potential actions:</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divert attention temporarily (humor, acceptance) • Keep worrying circumscribed to actual potential risks and be disciplined about not letting fears derail important life tasks. • Shift expectations about what to expect from day to day and about what is considered a "good day" • Clarify top priorities and focus on taking steps towards what is most important. • Create routines of living and try to let that structure organize and guide you

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<p>Potential Competence Actions: Coworker Support</p>	<p>Remind people of strategies and skills that have worked before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce work related skills • Reinforce use of consultation and supervision • Embrace your staff's strengths and capitalize upon them: for example, designate a technology expert and ask them to assist other staff who are struggling with technology
	<p>Encourage active coping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out an email summarizing the accomplishments of the team for the week • Send notes of acknowledgement and praise to staff. For example, send E-SHOUT outs to acknowledge team members for their work. <p>Help problem-solve and set achievable goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a way to acknowledge how much the team has done.

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<p>Potential Competence Actions: Coworker Support</p>	<p>Give extra training / mentoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage ways for staff to access support • Share resources, including trainings • Ask about work challenges and assist staff in finding solutions. For instance, encourage a team member to consult with other programs or organizations and share what they find
	<p>Help "recalibrate" expectations/goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and digest incoming policies and directives to filter the information for staff • Talk with staff about their reactions to changes • Highlight some of the benefits of rapid changes, while providing validation for challenges • Provide practical and emotional support for those who were most strongly affected by changes

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<p>Potential Confidence Self- Care Actions</p>	<p>Use small triumphs to build confidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't forget the things you are doing everyday that make a difference, and realize there will be good days ahead
	<p>If you have doubts, talk with someone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to a mentor and/or other leader to “borrow” hope when feeling overwhelmed and use as needed <p>Don't push yourself to “process” the situation in any particular time frame, but if something triggers you, give yourself time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If someone emails or messages to “check in” and you think if you respond it will be hard to pick back up, respond when you are ready and share what you are comfortable sharing

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<p>Potential Confidence Self- Care Actions in the Context of Loss</p>	<p>Focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How sadness or despair will feel less acute with time • The moments when the pain/stress temporarily eases up • Being realistic • Reality • Acceptance • Worst-case scenarios • Changing beliefs that don't serve you • Honoring • Philosophy/religion/values • Healing
	<p>2/8/21</p>

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Potential Confidence Actions for Leaders: Laying a Foundation

- Remind people of the ideals and values that drew each of you to the work you are doing.
- Give regular positive feedback, and remind them about their positive impact, values, skills and competence.
- Give them tasks that they can be successful at.
- Foster and support taking steps to alleviate and mitigate the harmful effects of stress.

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Potential Confidence Actions for Leaders: Responding to Stress Reactions

- Allow the person to be reassigned or take a break from work.
- Be patient and open to the possibility that the person can fully return to work duties.
- Gradually increase duties and responsibilities when the person returns to work.
- Look for positive changes in the person's behavior.
- Mentor the person to consider other options if they continue to struggle, including leaving their current position.

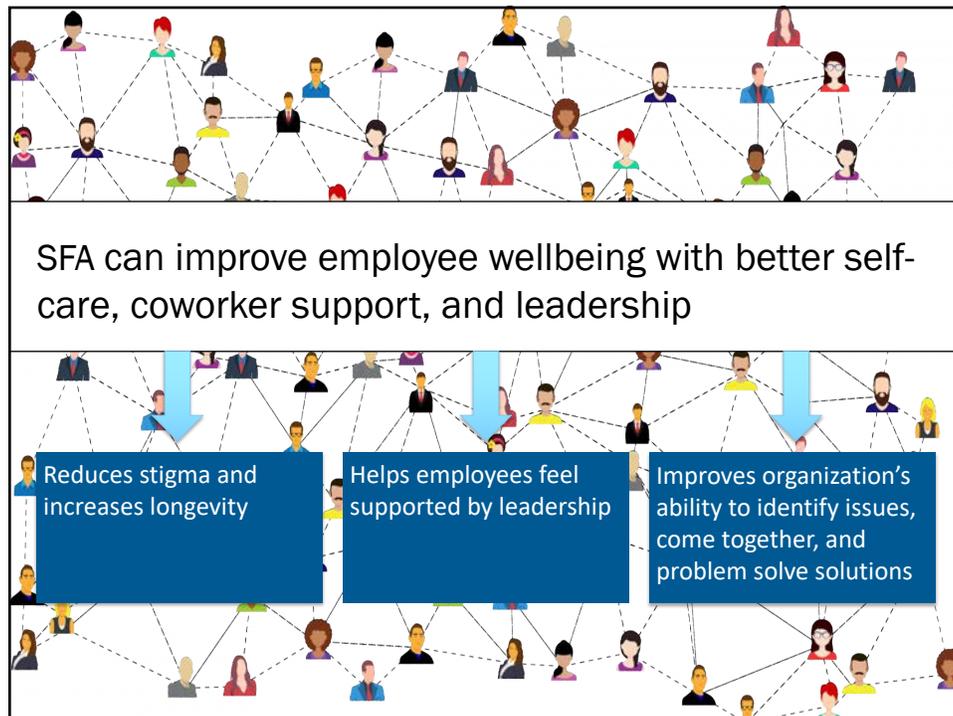
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<p>Potential Confidence Actions: Coworker Support</p>	<p>Support each other and remind each other of strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review past accomplishments and instill hope that they will be able to succeed now • Focus on core values, priorities • Discuss the mission of the team and why you are there to provide care • Share the double edge sword of values and remind of importance of finding balance
	<p>Look to learn from each situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I really benefitted from support from my colleagues to remind me that this is really new and sometimes we don’t know. The key lesson is to learn from each other”</i> <p>Mentor or recommend seeking out mentoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model humility; own your challenges to your team as it is appropriate and demonstrate your resiliency in making progress overcoming

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<p>Potential Confidence Actions: Coworker Support</p>	<p>Find ways to enhance gratitude</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Thankful Thursdays”
	<p>Honor and make meaning of losses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that everyone experiencing numerous losses and loss is not only about death of loved ones; offer opportunities to acknowledge these losses (e.g., vacations, graduations, ceremonies) • In team meetings; for example, staff from one team “dressed” or brought in props to represent either an important event or trip that they were no longer to engage in and gave each member a chance to share and discuss <p>Reframe guilt and self-defeating statements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share resources to remind about more helpful ways of thinking https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/COVID_helpful_thinking.asp

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Implementing SFA in Complex Systems

- Build informal networks rather than formal systems
- Create an endoskeleton of core principles that allows for emergence, growth, and adaptation
- The more uncertain you are, the more you'll need latitude and flexibility around the endoskeleton
- Small units are more successful
- Identify naturally occurring narratives and emphasize the ones which are going in right direction naturally – don't try to build a positive narrative
 - How can I create more stories like these rather than stories like those?
- Scale up or down in a complex system by decomposition and recombination (DNA)
- Work out the optimal instructional units, then create hopeful connectivity between those units, so novel forms (which are more resilient) can emerge.

(Cynefin model, Snowden, 2020)

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Think About How You Will Introduce SFA

An Example:

“We are starting to use the Stress First Aid Model to talk about the work we do. You will be hearing more about stress on a continuum and a way to support each other.

- SFA is a way to improve how you’re already working – not adding a new burden or replacing anything
- Goals are to create opportunities for people to access resources that already exist.
- SFA can improve enhance natural skills and processes that are already in place
- SFA requires engagement by peers and leaders – it is not a solo activity! It is meant as a way to improve how we work together and support each other, top to bottom and side to side.”

Discuss the stress continuum model

Discuss how SFA can address stress reactions



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Keep the Discussion Going

- Regularly add tips or actions that support green zone functioning to staff meetings.
- Gather stress zone data via brief check-ins or Stress Continuum questions, such as:
 - “What does a green shift look like here?” “What does it look like and feel like?”
 - “What about a yellow, shift?”
 - “How about an orange shift?”
- Look for opportunities to embed a brief SFA skill or technique for 2-5 minutes into unit activity
- Give SFA-related information in ongoing newsletters or other routine communications

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Gather Resources

- Compile information on hotlines and other resources, such as:
- Organizational resources
 - NCPTSD SFA toolkit
 - Hotlines
 - Schwartz Center for Compassionate Care
 - EAP resources
 - Childcare support
 - Chaplains and Mental Health Support
 - National Suicide Lifeline

Set a critical incident response policy, such as a unit-based group check-in or discussion, to allow staff to share emotions, connect with each other, determine needs, and instill hope

