

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE COVID-19 VIRUS AND REMOTE WORK:

In addition to the impact it has on society's health, the COVID-19 virus is having a huge impact on every system in which we engage. There is an inherent anxiety associated with these changes and the reality is this disruption in daily life will:

- Influence many individuals' access to basic needs (food, water, shelter, and money)
- Increase isolation
- Impact one's sense of safety
- Increase abusive behaviors and victimization.



Perpetrators of crime often capitalize on moments of insecurity and vulnerability, especially when there is an increase in isolation. Vulnerable populations, such as people with disabilities, Deaf individuals, the elderly and children are further exposed to abuse, as well as, victims/survivors of interpersonal violence (*Note: Victimization does not discriminate. Unless disclosed, there is no way of knowing if a staff member has experienced or is currently involved in an abusive relationship.*)

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT STRESS AND CRISIS:

- Stress is a natural aspect of life. There is positive and negative stress. Stress is positive when we are challenged and grow, however, it can become negative when it is chronic and overwhelming. When negative stress occurs long and frequently enough, it can deeply impact our mental and physical well-being (for instance, becoming more agitated, excitable, anxious, moody, depressed and easily triggered).
- Physically and emotionally, we crave homeostasis, or balance. During a crisis, or time of fear, we are unsettled by our lack of control and find ways to establish a new heightened or depressed "normal." Techniques we use to address and respond to stressful events are called *coping strategies*. These strategies can be healthy and unhealthy.
- A stressful event becomes a crisis when our coping mechanisms fail. Often, it stems from a lack of resources, limited support and little control over the circumstances.

While we are all doing what must be done to control the spread of COVID-19, it is also important to remember that *for some, home is not a safe space*. Be mindful and aware as you check in with your staff and consider their concerns.

CRISIS RESPONSES:

- Are individual and complex. There is no cookie cutter response or "fix"
- People feel a loss of control and this can lead to many difficult emotions, such as depression, anxiety, fear, anger and helplessness
- Include physical decline in health. Chronic stress can be extremely physical and you may see weight gain or loss, fatigue, aches and pains
- May lead to a decline in productivity, drive and passion

Promoting and building resilience and healthy coping skills can combat the impact of crisis.

HOW WE BUILD RESILIENCE:

- Establishing safety
- Social connection
- Feeling empowered
- Planning and preparing for plausible and impactful events

THE NOVA CRISIS RESPONSE MODEL

To promote healthy coping skills, the NOVA Crisis Response Team Training™ model adheres to the following steps of intervention: Safety & Security; Ventilation & Validation, Prediction & Preparation. Each step promotes awareness and meets the needs of all three “levels” of human cognition (Reptilian, Limbic, Neo-Cortex). With this as guidance, teams and staff can promote healthy coping skills and resilience through difficult times. Below are examples of ways to ensure your team receives support that empowers their resilience.

1. SAFETY & SECURITY	2. VENTILATION & VALIDATION	3. PREDICTION & PREPARATION
<p><i>Reptilian Brain:</i> Ensuring emotional and physical safety</p>	<p><i>Limbic Brain:</i> Allow for the expression of emotions and validate those concerns to de-escalate the individual's response</p>	<p><i>Neo-Cortex:</i> Support and empower an individual to reach their own solutions to stressors</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish rapport and connection by checking in with staff to ensure they feel safe • Confirm that all staff have access to basic necessities (water, food, shelter, etc.) • Respect and ensure confidentiality of all staff needs or disclosures, unless necessary to report as required by law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow for open communication and listen to concerns • Actively listen and focus on the emotions being expressed to ensure individual feels heard • Explore and validate/normalize concerns to show that the individual have been heard • Assist by reflecting back the emotions and concerns on which you pick up • Allow time for the individual to share and process. This is <i>not</i> the time for the listener to share experiences and concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore coping skills, support systems and other resources (past and present) • Provide time and space for individual preparation plans and conclusions • Promote collaboration among staff to predict future difficulties and plan for a realistic response • Focus on solutions available to the individual to create realistic plans of action, such as: identify support systems, internal and external resources, etc

The National Organization for Victim Assistance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and a leading national victims' rights organization, dedicated to supporting and empowering all victims/survivors of crime. For more information, please visit: www.trynova.org

Questions regarding our training and programs? Email: calliestewart@trynova.org