

Helping Employees Navigate Workplace Disruptions



Guidance for Leaders to Foster Stability and Support

When workplace disruption occurs, including job action, workplace reorganization, or even significant policy changes, employees may respond in very different ways. Their reactions often depend on the size of the disruption, how personally they were affected, and whether they took part in the action or continued working.

Restoring a positive and productive work environment will look different for each team. Leaders may need to manage a backlog of tasks, adjust processes, respond to client and stakeholder concerns, and address strained relationships that may have developed during the disruption. It is also important to consider how the wider community views the event.

Some employees may show stronger reactions depending on their life circumstances, personal triggers, or how this experience connects to past stressful or traumatic situations. It is normal for employees to take several days or weeks to return to their usual levels of wellbeing after a disruption.

People are generally resilient and some individuals may not exhibit any significant negative effects. However, you and some of your employees may exhibit signs of stress and require support to navigate workplace transitions. It is not uncommon for some people experiencing stress to minimize or avoid expressing their concerns and reactions.

How Leaders Can Support

Workplace disruptions and strained relationships can leave employees feeling powerless or unsettled. Leaders can foster a supportive environment where employees can regain a sense of control, competence, and confidence.

Helpful Steps Include:

- Identifying employees who may be at higher risk, such as those directly exposed to conflict or experiencing emotional or physical exhaustion.
- Ensuring that you or other leaders maintain consistent outreach to affected staff.
- Being proactive can make a meaningful difference in easing the transition back to normal operations.
- Remaining attentive and approach employee concerns with respect and sensitivity.



Signs of stress may include:

- Increased sadness or worrying
- Anxiety or guilt
- Irritability or restlessness
- Fatigue or low energy
- Frustration, resentment, or anger
- Ongoing conversations framed as "us vs. them"
- Difficulty focusing, making decisions, or completing tasks
- Increased distraction, absenteeism, or a decline in performance
- Heightened expectations of leaders to provide answers

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Strategies for Supporting Your Team



Practical Ways to Help Staff:

- Respect that employees may hold different perspectives, emotions, and opinions, and acknowledge these without judgment.
- Remind staff that each person has their own coping strategies and strengths.
- Encourage employees to stay connected with supportive colleagues, friends, and family.
- Share some of your own reflections, showing employees that leaders also experienced the disruption.
- Reassure staff that anxiety and stress levels can fluctuate and will not always look the same from one person to another.
- Be patient as employees return to their work routines and allow for adjusted schedules if possible.
- Communicate frequently and consistently with accurate and practical updates to help staff feel informed and connected.
- Address performance concerns directly and constructively if an employee struggles to resume responsibilities.
- Take immediate action if any employee behavior raises concerns about workplace or public safety.
- Maintain visibility, check-in regularly with staff, and provide reassurance wherever possible.

Provide employees with available EFAP resources, such as:

- Mental health supports (counselling, iCBT, children's services, First Step, Noojimo)
- Parenting resources
- Individual, couple, and family counselling
- Financial and legal advice (excluding employment law services)
- Career and life transition support (including returning to work)
- Health coaching for maintaining physical wellbeing

For Leaders Supporting Teams:

- Workplace disruptions can also be stressful for leaders. Take care of your own wellbeing and seek internal or external supports, such as EFAP services, when needed.
- Clearly explain how employees (and their dependents, if applicable) can access both internal and external supports, including the Employee and Family Assistance Program.
- Contact the GreenShield Management Team to request an HR or leader consultation if you require help supporting your staff or yourself (consultation@greenshield.ca).

Get crisis support 24/7/365
Support # - 1-833-707-4747

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