

Emergency crisis assistance

8 tips to managers dealing
with emergency situations



Introduction

This guide explains how you can support your employees if they are exposed to a sudden and serious incident.

Be sure to follow your workplace's guidelines for managing an acute crisis - if they exist. You can use this guide as a supplement or you can use it on its own.

First, you will be briefed on your job as a manager, then you will be provided with 8 concrete tips for your use. Finally, you will gain insight on what a crisis response is.

We hope that this guide will help you to act promptly with security and confidence in the event of a serious and sudden incident.



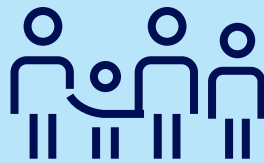
Your job as manager

Provide clarity and a sense of calm



- Help the employee away from the scene of the accident to a safe place away from prying eyes
- Create a sense of calm, safety and support by simply being present. Acknowledge and give your time, listen and create opportunities for talking and responding
- Ensure the availability of people trusted by the individual in crisis, such as next of kin, closest manager or HR
- Provide food and drink to help the person shift focus from the incident and prevent them from going into shock
- Make sure that fact-based information is provided

Home transport and family support



- Assist the distressed employee in getting home when they are mentally able
- Ensure that the employee in crisis is not alone
- Inform close relatives of the accident, if needed, and of the distressed employee's expected reactions
- Evaluate whether the employee needs practical help with, for example, arranging for children to be picked up

Planning



- Ensure that the crisis-stricken person can contact relevant authorities. Assist them, if necessary
- Develop a clear interim work plan
- Follow up on any work plans together
- Avoid making significant decisions immediately

Dansk Sundhedssikring's 8 tips to managers responding to an emergency

Immediately after the incident

1. Do not leave the distressed person alone

Never leave an employee in crisis alone. They need to feel calm, safe and supported. Make sure that the affected employee is taken to a secure and quiet place, away from prying eyes. Offer food and drink. This will help the person shift focus and prevent them from going into shock as the brain concentrates on eating and drinking.

2. Speak calmly and compassionately

You must create a calm atmosphere, offer support and speak soothingly. Allow the distressed employee to describe the incident. The more the employee in crisis talks about what happened, the better they are able to process it. It can help to piece together the facts into a coherent story. Help the crisis-stricken person with this, based solely on the facts that you know about the incident. Avoid conjecture and guesswork.

3. Embrace all reactions

It is essential that you acknowledge and accept all the feelings and emotions of the person in crisis without reservation. Everyone is different and everyone reacts differently to crises. There is no wrong or right way to respond. By just being present and giving space, you can help to create calm, regardless of the reaction.

4. Manage practical decisions

Make sure that the next of kin and other relevant persons are informed. In cases of physical injury, arrange for medical assistance or an ambulance. If necessary, accompany your employee or staff member to the hospital yourself. It is very common for a person in crisis to lose focus and to find it difficult to make decisions. Help them by handling practical matters such as cancelling appointments, ensuring that children are picked up from daycare, etc. Also ensure that the distressed person is accompanied home and that he or she is not alone for the first 24 hours.

5. Take care of yourself

It is important that you also take care of yourself. You, too, can be psychologically affected by being close to a serious incident and by having to take charge and take care of your employees. Talk to other colleagues, family members and friends about what you have witnessed.

The days and weeks after the incident

6. Maintain a dialogue and make a plan

Stay in close contact with the person in crisis and make sure they are receiving necessary support. Use the above-mentioned pieces of advice and 'The ABCs of Mental Health' at the back of this guide to help strengthen the employee's mental health. Develop a suitable interim work plan with them and arrange for both of you to evaluate and adjust the plan as needed.

7. Inform necessary colleagues

Keep colleagues and employees updated on the situation as necessary, and inform them of whether there will be any changes as a result of the incident.

8. Evaluate crisis management

Discuss the incident at the management level to clarify what conditions can and must change to prevent future incidents. Review your crisis management process. What went well? What could improve? What do you need so that you can better manage a similar situation in the future?

What is a crisis response?

Acute and violent events can induce significant mental stress for those involved or close by. As a manager, it is vital that you are equipped to help employees who are exposed to serious incidents. While no one expects you to be a crisis therapist, understanding the basic principles of psychological first aid is essential so that you can act quickly and professionally in a difficult situation.

A crisis response is a reaction in which one's previous life experience and coping skills are not sufficient to handle a particular situation.

Reactions can vary from person to person. Some are more outwardly oriented, while others are more inwardly oriented. Either is perfectly fine. Individuals can experience their feelings and reactions fluctuating (for example, from anger to tears). This is because the body and mind are processing the event and working to restore balance within the nervous system. It is how one normalises over time.

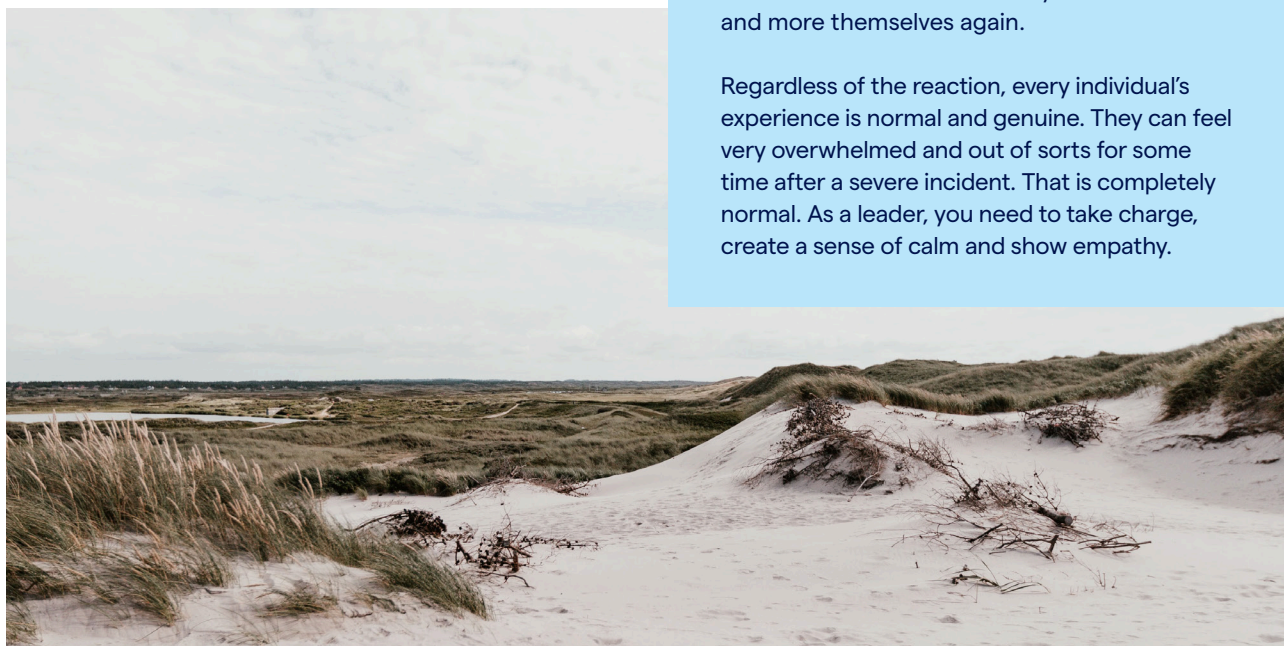
If a crisis-stricken person experiences rigid and fixed reactions that substantially affect their daily life more than 4 weeks after the event, they should consider talking to their doctor or medical adviser.

Normal crisis responses may include:

- Shock, crying, confusion, racing thoughts, pressure to talk and moments of silence
- Memory impairment, memory gaps and/or decreased concentration
- Fluctuating and intense emotions, interrupted by periods of lack of emotion
- Physical tension, headaches, nausea, poor appetite, sleep problems and fatigue

Everyone reacts differently. There is no right or wrong way to react to an emergency. Over time, the feelings will diminish and the distressed individual will slowly become more and more themselves again.

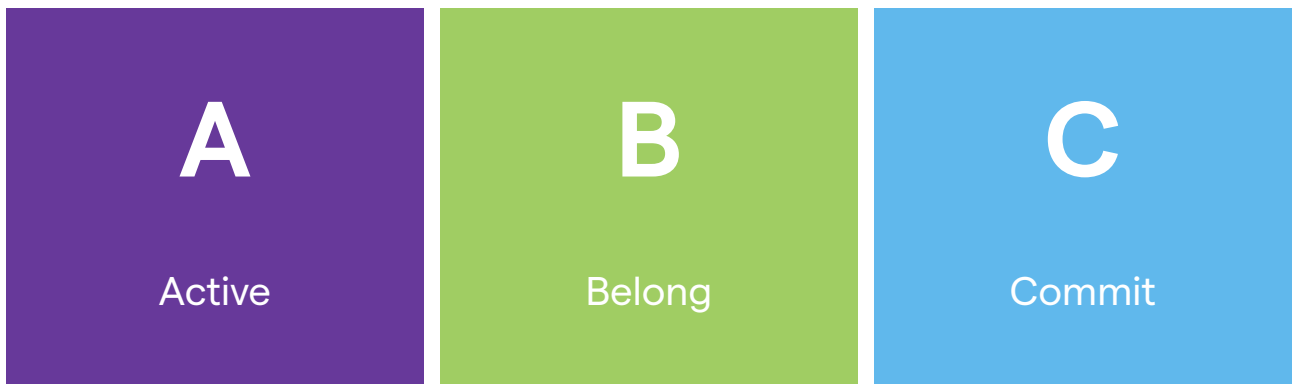
Regardless of the reaction, every individual's experience is normal and genuine. They can feel very overwhelmed and out of sorts for some time after a severe incident. That is completely normal. As a leader, you need to take charge, create a sense of calm and show empathy.



The ABCs of Mental Health

Research demonstrates that mental well-being is strengthened when you do something, do something with someone, and do something meaningful. It is called 'The ABCs of Mental Health'. Whether it is a walk, participation in local community sports, creative activities, volunteering or something else is not so important. The key is to do something active, shared, and meaningful.

You can, for example, hold walk and talks, ensure there is fresh air during breaks, and foster collegiality. Or, for example, you can have friendly chats with employees at the coffee machine. It is not so important what you do, as long as you do something active and meaningful to provide you with tranquility and energy. As a manager, you have the opportunity to create the conditions that make 'The ABCs of mental health' possible in the workplace.



You can read more about 'The ABCs of Mental Health' here:

<https://psy.ku.dk/abc/well-being>

The logo features the letters 'A', 'B', and 'C' in a stylized, outlined font. The letter 'C' has a small purple dot in its center. To the right of the letters, the text 'FOR MENTAL SUNDHED' is written in a smaller, sans-serif font.

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