

MANAGING TRAUMA IN YOUR STAFF - DETOX NOT DEBRIEF QUICK VERSION

This is a difficult time and many staff will experience things they have never experienced before. Due to high stress, many staff will be more on edge, reactive, and possibly tearful. However, stress and anxiety are natural responses, and anxiety right now can be adaptive as it allows staff to stay alert. It can be tempting to rush to rescue and provide a "debrief" but if enforced or led by untrained people it can actually be damaging. However there are ways to enable staff to "process" the trauma. The following is a quick guide adapted from guidance from the COVID Trauma Response Working Group (please see the full guidance for more detail) www.traumagroup.org.

Do

- make sure you are keeping lines of communication up
- try to rotate people from areas of high to low stress, ensure breaks, and allow people to take their days off
- remember that although this is stressful and many may initially react with stress, most will recover using their own natural resources, which can take up to one month
- make use of natural ways people process- conversations, checking in on each other
- try huddles at the start and end of the shift (see our How to Huddle tip sheet)
- watch out for staff still struggling with the incident one month later



Don't

- Mandate a debriefing session or make people talk through the details of what happened
- Run a "debrief" with untrained staff
- Rush to refer to psychological therapies- this can pathologise someone's natural response



Adapted from guidance from the COVID Trauma Response Working Group