

COVID-19

The Buddy System – A Workplace Tool For Emotional Support

2020



Buddying Is One Way To Action Step 5 In The '7 Steps For Emotional Support' Tool

1. Acknowledge your own feelings and accept that others may react differently to the same situation
 - Feeling distressed is an experience that many healthcare workers are likely to experience. It is quite common to be feeling this way during a crisis
 - It is very helpful to know your personal signs of distress so that you know when you need to respond
2. Take care of your basic needs *first!*
 - Maintain your day-to-day normal activities and routine wherever / whenever possible
 - Ensure sleep, rest and respite, eat sufficient and healthy food
 - Make time to unwind. Take time for yourself
 - Try to do physical activities you enjoy
 - Don't use smoking, alcohol, caffeine or drugs to deal with your emotions
3. Stay connected, especially with your loved ones
 - Some health workers may unfortunately experience avoidance or anger by their family or community due to fear. This can make an already challenging situation far more difficult.
 - If possible, stay closely and consistently connected with your loved ones, including through digital methods
4. Draw on the skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life challenges.
5. Turn to your colleagues, your manager or other trusted persons for support.
 - Consider implementing a local buddy system.
6. Seek accurate information / facts
 - Stay up to date with Monash Health's advice and support
 - Follow protection and prevention recommendations provided
7. Limit the time you spend watching or listening to media (including social media) coverage that you know is inaccurate and/or perceive as upsetting
 - Don't engage in spreading rumours, conjecture and 'gallows humour'

What Do Buddies Actually Do?

DO

- Get to know each other
- Talk about background, interests, hobbies, and family.
- Understand and reinforce each other's 'best self' to respond to a crisis using the '7 Steps For Emotional Support' tool.
- Keep a supportive eye on each other.
- Work in the same location if / when they can.
- Set up formal times to check-in with each other.
- *Listen loudly* and share experiences and feelings.
- Acknowledge tough situations.
- Recognise and celebrate accomplishments, even small ones.
- Offer to help with basic needs such as sharing supplies and transportation.
- Share practical ideas for stress relief (e.g. rest, routine sleep, exercise, and deep breathing/mindfulness).
- Help each other feel "safe" to ask for help and support.

DON'T

- Take on the role of Mental Health Professional
- Pass judgement
- Breach trust and confidentiality
- Overstep personal boundaries



How Do We Set Up A Buddy System?

- Buddying should be **100%** voluntary.
- Formal is working better than informal.
- Having a co-ordinator really helps the matching process.
- Don't over-engineer or over-complicate it. Keep it local and simple.
- Match people up, not based on existing relationships, but on encouraging diversity and new learning.
- Give people a confidential choice.
- Pairs works best.
- Don't reinforce existing silos or cliques.
- Buddying does not replace friendship or leadership.
- Adapt the model to your specific needs.
- It lasts as long as it lasts.

If it doesn't work for you that is ok too!



Support Is Available

- Monash Health “Call A Psychologist”

0418 905 414

- Monash Health Employee Assistance Programme

1300 687 327

- For more health and wellbeing support information

<https://coronavirus.monashhealth.org/>

