

# Leadership's Guide to the Aftermath of a Workplace Shooting

A shooting in the workplace presents unique challenges for the leadership of an organization. Productivity has been disrupted, and employees may be emotional or unsure of what is expected of them during such a time. It is important for an organization and its leadership to respond quickly in order to keep the workplace functioning, and to lead employees through this difficult time. It can be helpful to know what kind of reactions you might expect from employees, and what you can do to be helpful to them.

If you feel you need further assistance contact:

Employee Assistance Program

(866) 579-4634

## COMMON REACTIONS

- Shock and disbelief - people may feel like "this can't be true" or feels "unreal"
- Fear and anxiety - about what happened and about it happening again in the future
- Anger and blaming - at coworkers, themselves, leadership, or the organization
- Sadness - over any injuries or losses that may have occurred
- Guilt - may wish they had acted differently or believe they could have somehow stopped the violence
- Preoccupation or worry - about those directly impacted by the event, and a desire to reach out to help
- Feeling unsafe - regardless of whether there is a current threat
- Confusion or difficulty thinking clearly
- Poor concentration and decreased productivity for a time - people will want to talk about what happened, so try to be flexible and allow them time to do so
- Irritability - may be on edge or quicker to anger
- Interacting more with others, or withdrawing
- Hyper-vigilance/hyper-sensitivity - any sight, sound, or smell that reminds them of the incident may trigger reactions similar to when it happened
- Reluctance to come into work
- Physical reactions - such as fatigue, headache, stomach ache, muscle tension, or difficulty eating or sleeping



## WHAT LEADERSHIP CAN DO TO HELP

- As soon as possible, hold a meeting and provide factual, honest information about what happened. Periodically update employees as new information becomes known.
- Validate employees concerns about security at work. Let them know what the company plans to do to help keep them safe.
- Express care and concern for employees' safety and well-being by being visible and checking in with them individually. Listen to how they are doing, offering a compassionate response.
- Acknowledge and thank employees for appropriate behavior during and after the incident.
- Be flexible and understanding of how your employees are reacting and the impact the incident has had on their ability to work as usual.
- Allow employees some time to talk with each other and process what happened.
- Coordinate with HR regarding employee(s) attendance at funerals or memorial services.

- Consider conducting some kind of tribute to the deceased employee(s), like a memory book to give to the family. This is an optional way to share memories of their coworker.
- Acknowledge the anniversary of the incident, when memories and some reactions may reemerge.



## WHAT TO AVOID

- Minimizing what happened or employees' reactions - saying things like "you will get over it" or acting like everything is business as usual
- Making employees talk about what happened - an avenue for sharing their reactions can be made available, but not required



## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

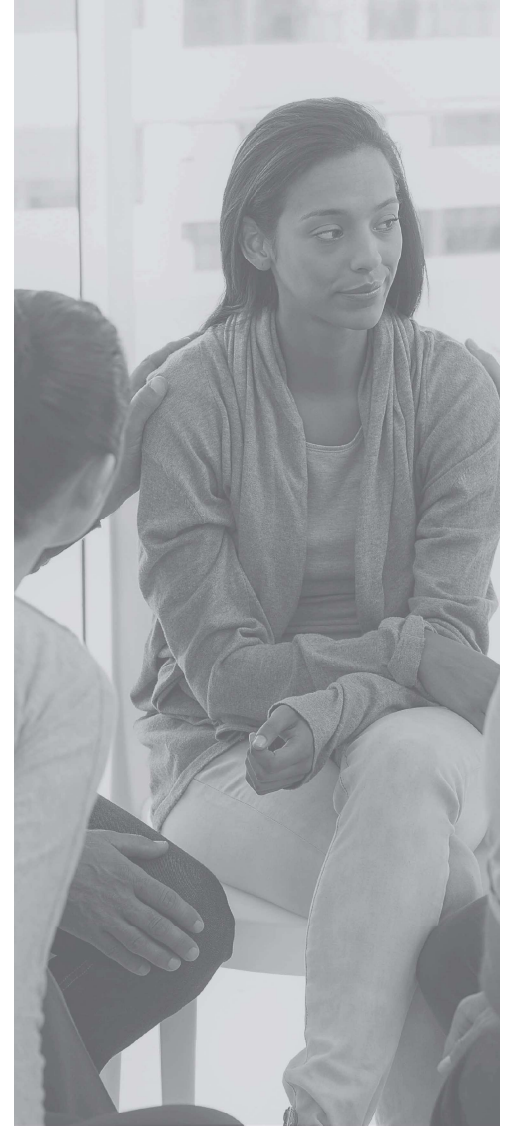
The aftermath of a shooting in the workplace is a stressful time for leadership as well. It is important to take care of yourself, especially during times of high stress, as it will enable you to be more productive and helpful to your employees. Here are some suggestions:

- Eat healthy and drink lots of water - your body and mind need the nutrients to recover from stress and expel the stress chemicals
- Engage in regular exercise - this helps to boost chemicals that improve mood, reduce stress, and improve sleep
- Try to maintain your usual sleep routine - if having trouble sleeping, get up and do a relaxing activity for a little while to distract your mind from worries
- Help someone else - be a support to your colleagues and employees
- Do some things you enjoy - part of taking care of yourself is making time to relax and have fun; this gives you a break from worries and helps to maintain balance
- Talk to someone - family, friends, coworkers, a counselor, faith mentor, or anyone else whom you feel comfortable sharing your feelings with and is helpful to you
- Return to routine - as soon as you are able to, engage in your normal routine; this may help you regain your sense of control and predictability of life
- Think about other times - when you have coped with difficult situations. What positive coping strategies worked for you then? Can you practice those now?

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