

This Quick Guide highlights how Leaders can support team members during exceptional times and keep focused on the mission while maintaining Warfighter lethality and optimizing military performance.

REMEMBER STRESS FUNDAMENTALS

Stressful experiences are characterized by uncertainty, ambiguity, and unpredictability. Stress takes a toll physically, emotionally and cognitively.

Physical	Stress can disrupt sleep and contribute to physical problems like stomachaches, muscle tension, and headaches.
Emotional	Stress can lead to emotional ups and downs, being easily upset, anxious, and angry.
Cognitive	Stress can interfere with attention and working memory so that even simple tasks take more cognitive effort.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE SITUATION

Leaders are in a unique role because they can help teams navigate challenges and get through difficulties at work together

Stay Up-to-date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track information actively to make sure to have the most up-to-date information Share specific information as soon as you can Be clear about what you don't know Encourage communication flow <u>up</u> the chain in case information goes directly to team members
Communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with subordinate leaders and others about organizational changes on a routine basis Consider over-communicating during intense periods of uncertainty Repeat information and be patient: anxiety can make it hard for team members to process information
Be Proactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicate meeting time for topics related to stress linked to the situation Use walkabouts to ensure you are visible and available as a way of supplementing a traditional open-door policy



BE DELIBERATE IN YOUR ROLE AS A LEADER

How Leaders decide to respond will influence the team's resilience and ability to remain effective in an uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment.

Set the Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage a team culture of compassion, strength, and mutual support• Consider that the entire team may need to be informed (including those not directly affected)• Anticipate your steps as a leader in the event that the organization is directly impacted• Reinforce a message of gratitude for the professionalism and dedication of the entire team
Expect Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider that there may be strong reactions, including tears (have a box of tissues handy!)• Reflect that for some there may be an array of emotions associated with stress and fear• Remember you can't necessarily fix the situation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Be present: simply being there can make a difference<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid unrealistic reassurance – it doesn't help and will hurt credibility
Support Life Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After validating their experience, you can check in and offer genuine concern<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> "How can I help right now?"<input type="checkbox"/> "Would you like to call anyone?"<input type="checkbox"/> "We are all more than our jobs"<input type="checkbox"/> "It's not a reflection of you and your contributions to the mission"<input type="checkbox"/> "You are not alone"• Consider that for some employees, it will be critical for them to know that you<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Are also feeling the uncertainty keenly<input type="checkbox"/> Want to support them in their next steps as much as you can
Engage in Self-Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remember that stress at work during exceptional times can impact everyone<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Lead by example when it comes to the fundamentals of sleep, exercise and nutrition<input type="checkbox"/> Connect with your counterparts and invest in your own social support<input type="checkbox"/> Be patient with yourself, remembering to "control the controllables"
Use Real-time Stress Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For rapid stress relief, try the following techniques<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> "Box" breathing (breathe in for a count of 4; hold for a count of 4; breathe out for a count of 4; hold for a count of 4 – repeat 2-3 times)<input type="checkbox"/> 3x3 grounding (name 3 things you can see, hear, and feel physically)<input type="checkbox"/> Self-talk (talk yourself through the next steps or use motivational phrases like "I've been through tough times before" and "this is something we can get through")<input type="checkbox"/> 5,5,5 (ask yourself how will you feel 5 weeks, 5 months, and 5 years from now to help gain perspective that this experience will eventually be less difficult than it is now)

Leading during exceptional times provides an opportunity to

- ❖ Meet team members where they are
- ❖ Tailor your response to their individual differences
- ❖ Maintain focus on Warfighter readiness