

*Looking after yourself
and your team
members following a
critical incident*





What is this guide for?

This pack is here to give you, as a people leader at Australia Post, practical information on looking after yourself and your team members following a critical incident involving serious harm, critical injury or death, or a potentially traumatic event, so you can support your own wellbeing and provide guidance and care for your team.

How it might be used

Use the pack as a quick reference guide to understand common reactions, lead supportive conversations, and access resources to help you and your team after a critical incident.

What's inside

- Common emotional, mental, and physical reactions after a critical incident.
- Simple ways to look after yourself, and your team members, in the days and weeks afterward.
- Where to find extra support, including free and confidential help through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), for yourself and to share with your team members.



Common reactions following a critical incident

The safety and wellbeing of every team member is our number one priority. Your leadership plays an important role in helping people feel safe and supported during challenging times.

After a critical incident, teams may be affected in different ways. Some people may be directly involved, while others are impacted indirectly through what they saw, heard, or by supporting others. Leaders may also feel the impact personally while supporting their team.

It's common to experience a range of emotional, physical, or behavioural responses after an incident. These are normal reactions to an abnormal event and part of the body and mind's recovery process. Everyone reacts differently, and responses may change over time.

For most people, reactions ease with support. If your own reactions, or those of your team, aren't improving or are affecting day-to-day functioning, additional support is available.

SELF-REFLECTION

- What do you notice when you're stressed?
- What are your signs something is "off"?
- Who could you talk to if you need extra support?
- What am I doing/could I do to model healthy coping strategies and self care for my team?

You might notice

Emotions

- Shock, disbelief, or feeling numb
- Fear or anxiety about safety
- Sadness or low mood
- Anger or irritability
- Guilt or shame

Physical and sleep changes

- Trouble sleeping or disturbing dreams
- Feeling tired or worn out
- Muscle tension, headaches, or stomach issues

Behavioural and social changes

- Wanting to be alone or pulling away from others
- Finding it hard to concentrate or make decisions
- Changes in appetite or energy levels
- Loss of interest in things you usually enjoy

Looking after yourself and your team in the following days after a critical incident



Prioritise safety and comfort – for yourself and your team. Make sure everyone has a safe space to recover. Encourage (without forcing) breaks and healthy boundaries with news and social media. TIP: When you have viewed/listened to media, stop and reflect - is it helping you feel informed and calm, or just adding stress?



Lead with empathy and let your team guide the conversation. People respond differently – some may need extra support, others may not. Be mindful of cultural or personal connections and any heightened concerns. Avoid formal debriefing or asking people to relive details of the incident; instead, focus on listening, reassurance, and practical support.



Stay connected. Look for signs of distress, listen and check in regularly, and link people to support like EAP (1300 687 627) if they want it. This helps prevent issues from escalating and builds healthier teams.



Role model healthy routines. Demonstrate regular eating, hydration, work boundaries and gentle movement, and encourage or provided space for your team to do the same. This may be making time for lunch no matter the activity or taking a short, gentle walk break or getting outside for some fresh air.



Model grounding techniques. Grounding techniques help calm overwhelming feelings by bringing your focus to the present – for example, notice what you can see, hear, feel, smell and taste, or take slow, deep breaths. Remind yourself of things that bring you comfort or joy, even if small. If you find this useful, share your reflections with your team members.



Reduce overwhelm. Be flexible with work arrangements and have open conversations rather than making assumptions. Work together on what's reasonably possible.



Finally, look after yourself. Reach out for support if you need it – caring for yourself enables you to care for others.



Looking after yourself and your team in the following weeks after a critical incident

Model everyday routines

- Gently return to normal routines and encourage your team to do the same.
- Prioritise work boundaries, regular meals, and some movement each day.

Stay connected

- Check in with your team and trusted colleagues.
- Foster a supportive environment where people feel safe to connect, if they choose.

Focus on what you can control

- Help your team make small, manageable choices and ask “what do we need right now?” rather than “What should we be doing?”
- Remember, small steps still count.

Create calm and stability

- Keep the work environment predictable and move at a pace that suits the team – it may vary! Try not to decide for them.
- Some may want “business as usual,” others may need more time - support both.

Take small steps

- Remind your team that healing takes time and that many reactions (including no reaction at all) are normal.
- If anyone’s distress worsens, encourage early professional support.

Everyone’s recovery is different

- Acknowledge that everyone’s recovery is different.
- Avoid comparisons and help each team member find what works for them.



Make time to check in!

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PREPARE

Prepare for your discussion noting what signs you have noticed, what are they doing differently?

ASK

Ask open questions without leading them to an answer.

LISTEN

Listen to what they are saying, and notice what they are doing

SUPPORT

What support do they currently have, and what do they need ?
What professional support can you refer them to?



Wellbeing Action tool

The key to building wellbeing is finding out what works for you. It can feel like a big task to make a plan to improve your mental wellbeing.

Use Beyond Blue's Wellbeing Action Tool to help you

- ✓ *Identify things you already do that help*
- ✓ *Remind yourself why they work for you*
- ✓ *Set some goals or easy patterns*
- ✓ *Create the plan and return for inspiration*

[Download Beyond Blue's wellbeing action tool](#)





Supports and Resources: Where to go for help

To help streamline mental health support and ensure team members are directed to the most appropriate resources, refer to below table for where typical mental-health related queries should be directed. This ensures the most timely and effective responses across the business.

Mental health escalations	Non-urgent personal mental health support	Non-urgent workplace mental health support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifeline 13 11 14 Specific external support services (see Health and Wellbeing Hub) Leadership Support - People Services Emergency Services 000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAP 1300 687 327 Specific external support services (see Health and Wellbeing Hub) Mental health support - Australia Post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with immediate leader (where possible and appropriate) Recording My Safety incident for triage by Mental Health Specialist in Injury Management
Mental health training requests	People leader guidance	People query
<p>Team member training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thriving minds e-learning search in myLearning <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> My Learning Access relevant and personalised learning with 'Success Factors'. </div> <p>Leader training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thriving leaders half day training course – booking instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager Support through EAP 1300 687 327. A confidential coaching and advisory service for people leaders to seek support and advice for managing your team. Team members and people leaders can also contact People Services on 1300 116 947 for guidance on people-related queries or HR support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a library of knowledge available on the People & Culture page on Isaac. If you still require support, please raise a query via the People Services Portal, and a member of the team will respond to your query.