

Workplace support after trauma



Workplaces are in a strong position to help someone who has experienced a potentially traumatic event. Business owners, leaders, managers, supervisors and work mates can all provide support.

When someone experiences a traumatic event, their reactions can sometimes seem unusual or unpredictable, and they can vary a lot from person to person.

These reactions will usually become less intense after a few weeks, and the understanding and support of the workplace and workmates is especially important during this time.

People may experience multiple potentially traumatic events over their career. Its not always big events that most impact people – sometimes it's an event that really resonates with them, or a series of events that build until one event becomes the 'straw that broke the camel's back'.

How can I help support and guide someone?

✓ DO

Provide practical help in the moments and days afterwards: Immediately after an event, they might appreciate the offer of a lift or to phone a loved one.

In the days following, you might help organise or reassign their work tasks or driving schedules or routes so they can focus on their recovery.

If they need time off work, support them with a return-to-work plan that has been developed with them.

Be empathetic and understanding: Hearing "It's okay to feel this way" reassures people that their reactions are normal.

Offer choices: Listen without judgement and let them decide what type of support they're comfortable with, whether that's from you or someone else, in person, online or via text.

Encourage connection with others: Connecting with others reminds them they are not alone. Your support reminds them their experiences are acknowledged and understood by the workplace.

Follow up: If appropriate in your role, regularly check in to show you care.

Link with other supports: Remind them of the workplace and other available supports and resources. Encourage them to seek professional help if you're worried about them.

Provide them with reliable information: Provide information about how they can look after themselves, and when and how to seek help. Direct them to the Recovery after Trauma resources on the Healthy Heads website.



✗ DON'T

Don't minimise their experience: Avoid phrases like, "It's not a big deal."

Don't pressure them to talk: Let them share when they're ready.

Don't overstep boundaries: Respect their privacy and avoid probing for details. You aren't expected to take on the role of their counsellor.

If you're concerned about them, or they aren't improving after a couple of weeks:

- Encourage them to talk to their GP.
- Support them to access their Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if available.
- Help them access free professional counselling through TIACS, a service for blue collar workers including truckies, farmers, tradies and their families and supporters. Phone/text 0488 846 988. www.tiacs.org

More helpful resources

- Other support options and resources are on the Healthy Heads website or App. www.healthyheads.org.au
- R U OK? in Trucks and Sheds [conversation guide](#) has more tips for you.