

Key tips for managing teams

Team meetings

One of the most important support measures to put in place as a team leader or manager during trying times is to create a supportive and open atmosphere for staff/colleagues, so they feel comfortable to share how they are doing and to ask for support when they need it.

As a team leader or manager, be proactive in creating a culture of mutual team support by:

- Talking openly about stress and psychosocial support so staff can express their feelings and concerns without fearing consequences.
- Enhancing a sense of belonging and togetherness through regular team meetings.
- Making yourself available for supervision or private conversations with individual staff members.
- Proactively reaching out to those you feel may be in distress or in need of support.
- Respecting confidentiality to create a safe environment for others to seek support.
- Celebrate team achievements (successes) as well as addressing crisis events.

Suggested themes to discuss at team meetings to ensure the well-being of staff

The suggested sentences can be adapted to suit a specific situation.

- How are we doing in this current phase of the operation?
- How is the current situation affecting you?
- What (good) selfcare strategies are you using?
- What is working well?
- How do you feel/what do you think about the upcoming changes/ending of the operation?
- What have you most appreciated in the current operation/work with your colleagues?
- Which can we do to minimize the stressors in our current ways of working?
- Are there any tools or knowledge that could help us better handle stressors as a team?

Suggested structure of team meetings including taking stock of how staff is coping

Team meetings are called giving adequate notice with the proposed agenda.

- Welcome everyone to the meeting. Inform participants about who will be lead the meeting and who will take notes, and if these will be shared.
- Go over the agenda and ask if anyone has points to add to the agenda.
- Give accurate and updated information about the current situation.
- Ask if anyone has any comments or questions.
- Conduct a round or allow those who want to share how they are doing.
 - Ensure that everyone has an option to speak as well as ensuring that no one is forced to speak. Thank each speaker and ask who would like to speak next.

- Sum up the key points that have been mentioned in a generalized way so no one can be identified. Thank everyone for their contribution. Mention which internal or external supports are available for staff if needed.
- Discuss other work-related points on the agenda.
 - Ensure action points are agreed upon and it is clear who is the agenda point holder, and when to follow up.
- End the meeting by thanking everyone for their contribution.

Suggested topics for team meetings focusing on stress management and coping

If a team has been working for some time, it can be good to take some time in a meeting for some personal reflections. Pick one or two of the below questions. After having introduced the topic, it is an option to ask team members to think for a few minutes noting down a few points, and next invite team members to share their reflections. Thank each of them when they have spoken and invite another member to speak. It is an option at any point to ask if other members have good advice to share.

- What are your personal signs and reactions that you are in cumulative stress?
- What are your best stress management methods?
- If you know good stress management methods, do you use them and how often?
- What prevents you from using the stress management methods?
- If you experience a critical incident, what additional stress management methods could you use
- Ask staff members to write a list of activities that revitalize them. Share with the team if team members feel comfortable sharing.

End the meeting by thanking team members for their input. If the collective reflection and sharing has given rise to new ideas or input from your side, do share them.

Peer support

A few questions to ask to get a sense of how a colleague is doing during and after the pandemic:

- How are you doing?
 - Would you like any additional support to manage xx situation? If yes, how can I support you?

Appreciation of staff members

Which simple ways can you use to acknowledge and thank staff members at team meetings? Suggestions include (adapt to context): sending them a mail or letter of appreciation, or arranging a small gathering, publicly thanking them etc.

Individual or group defusing after stressful events

The PS Centre has a very useful chapter *PFA in groups – support to teams* (see p. 66 to 78) in *A Guide to Psychological First Aid for Red Cross Red Crescent Societies*. The chapter guides managers in running support meetings after stressful and critical events. The guide is currently also available in Arabic, Dari and French.

<https://pscentre.org/?resource=a-guide-to-psychological-first-aid-for-red-cross-red-crescent-societies&selected=single-resource>