

How Mental Health Providers Can Care for Themselves and Support Colleagues During the COVID-19 Virus Outbreak



National Center for

PTSD

POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

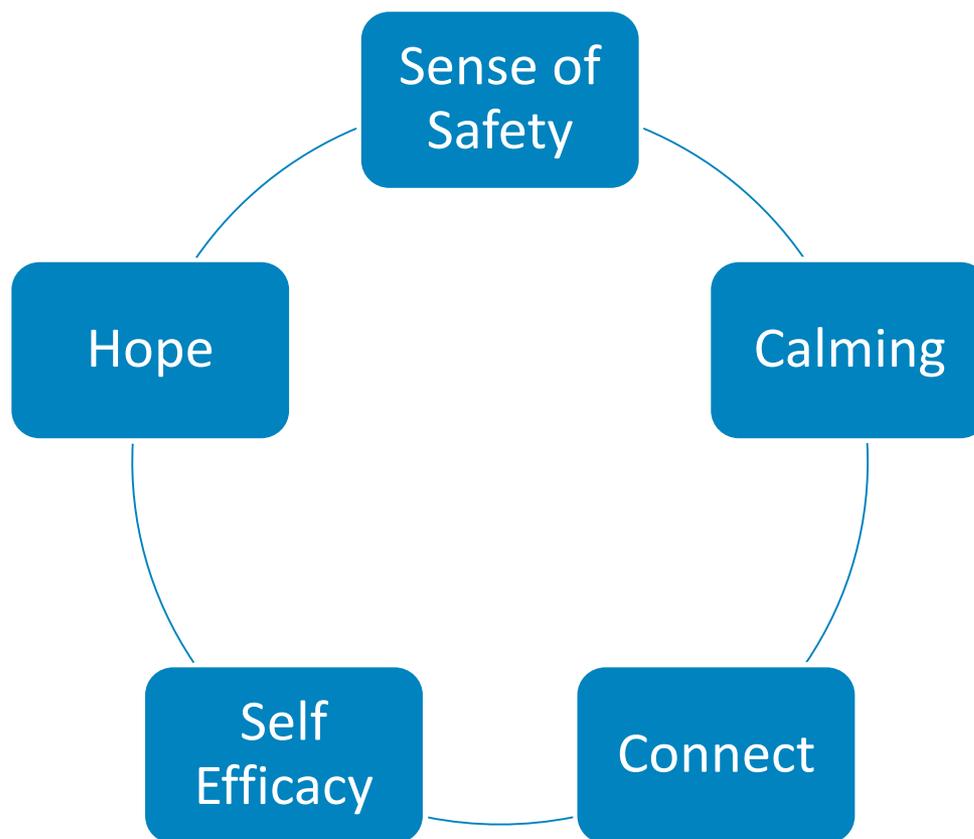
Patricia Watson, Ph.D.
National Center for PTSD

April 2020

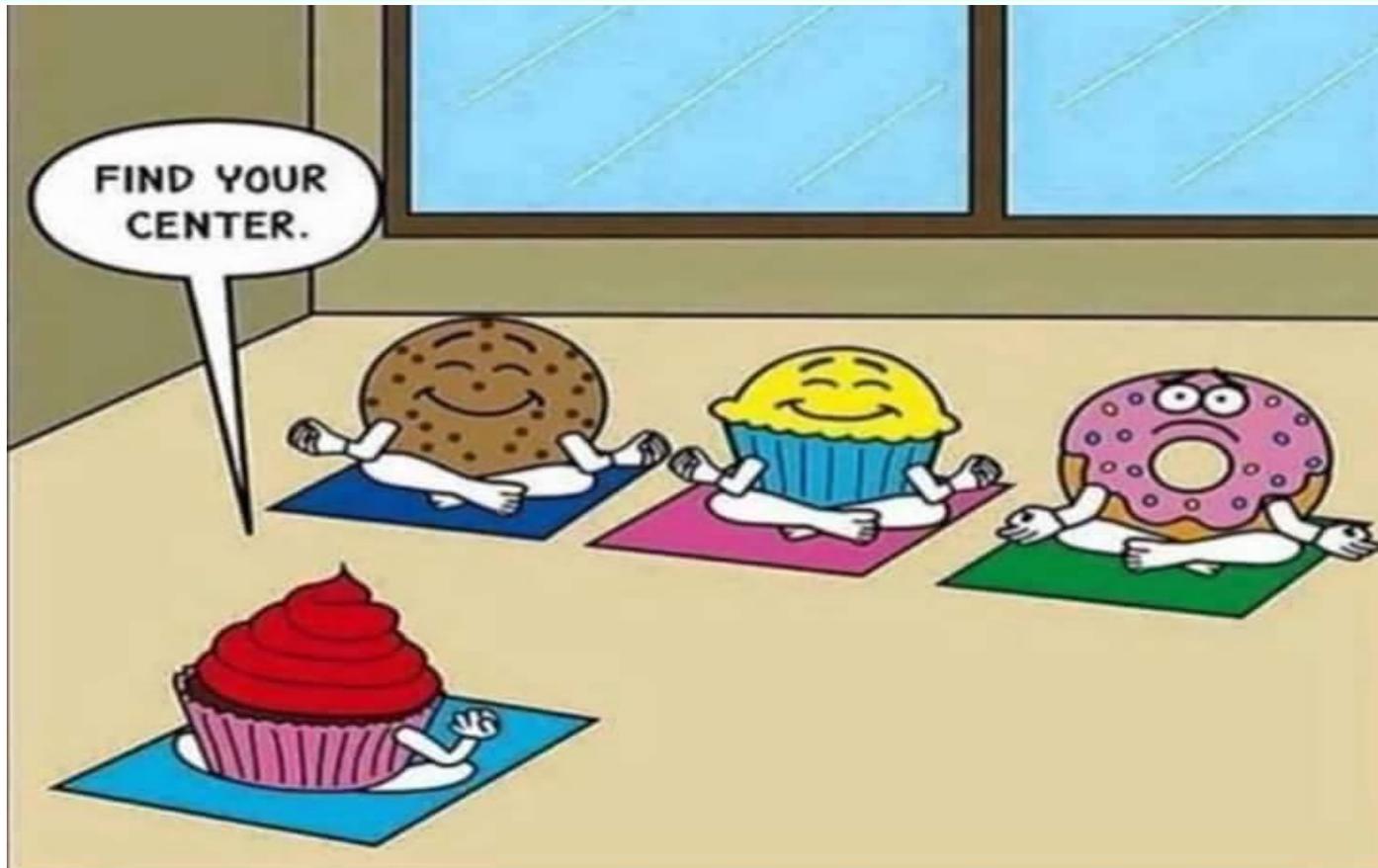


VA Defining
HEALTH **EXCELLENCE**
CARE In the 21st Century

Factors in Recovery From Adversity and Stress



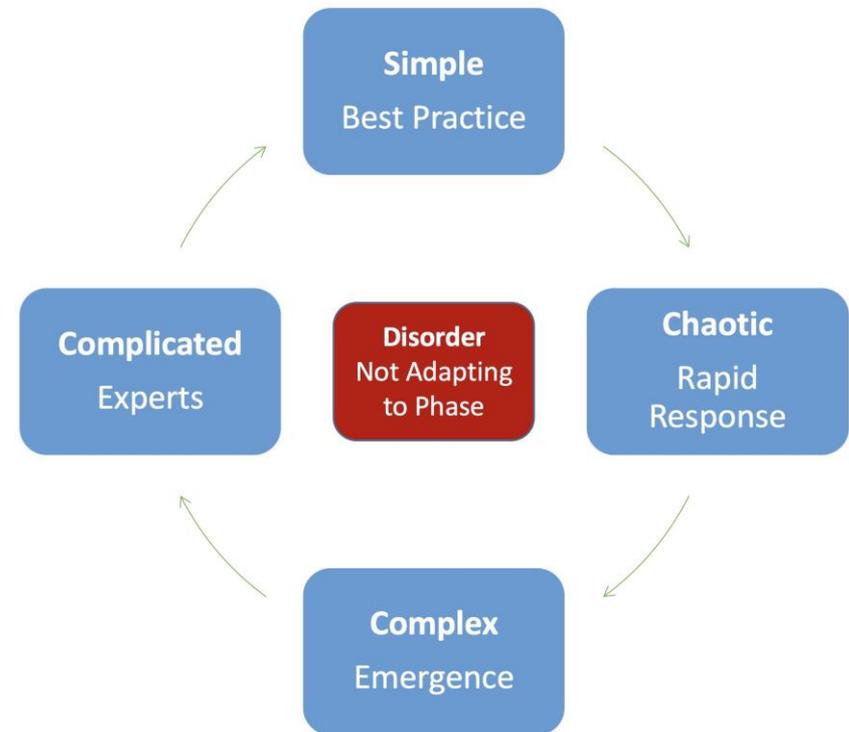
No One Size Fits All



The Chaotic Context of a Pandemic: Cynefin Framework

Wellbeing requires:

- Responding to ever-changing contexts.
- Enhanced communication, flexibility.
- Modified expectations and patience.
- Staying present, centered and grounded in fluid conditions.
- Continuously re-assessing, experimenting, tolerating failure, and remaining creative.



Double-Edged Sword of Provider Values

<u>Strength</u>	<u>Guiding Ideal</u>	<u>Vulnerability</u>
Placing the welfare of others above one's own welfare	Selflessness	Personal wellbeing is not a priority
Commitment to accomplishing missions and protecting others	Loyalty	Guilt after loss or perceived mission failure
Toughness and ability to endure hardships without complaint	Stoicism	Not acknowledging significant symptoms
Following an internal moral compass to choose "right" over "wrong"	Moral Code	Feeling frustrated and betrayed when others fail to follow a moral code
Becoming the best and most effective professional possible	Excellence	Feeling ashamed of (denial or minimization) imperfections

Stress Continuum: Circumstances and Features

READY

Circumstances:

Well trained
Supported

Optimal functioning:

At one's best
In control
Motivated

REACTING

Circumstances:

Responding to multiple stressors at work or home

Double-edged sword
vulnerabilities

Mild and transient distress or impairment:

Changes in mood
Loss of motivation
Loss of focus
Physical changes

INJURED

Circumstances:

Strong or multiple stressors:

- Trauma
- Loss
- Moral injury
- Wear and tear

More severe or persistent distress or impairment:

Loss of control
No longer feeling like normal self

ILL

Circumstances:

Unhealed orange zone stress
Additional stress
Risk factors

Clinical mental disorder:

Symptoms persist and worsen
Severe distress
Functional impairment

Characteristics of Stress First Aid

- Self-care and coworker support framework
- Early supportive / preventive actions
- Flexibility and “tiny steps” are emphasized
- Timing and context are important
- Mentoring and problem solving are highlighted
- SFA is not meant to address all ranges of issues
- Bridging to higher care is recommended when indicated



Stress First Aid Model



Seven Cs of Stress First Aid:

1. CHECK

Assess: observe and listen

2. COORDINATE

Get help, refer as needed

3. COVER

Get to safety ASAP

4. CALM

Relax, slow down, refocus

5. CONNECT

Get support from others

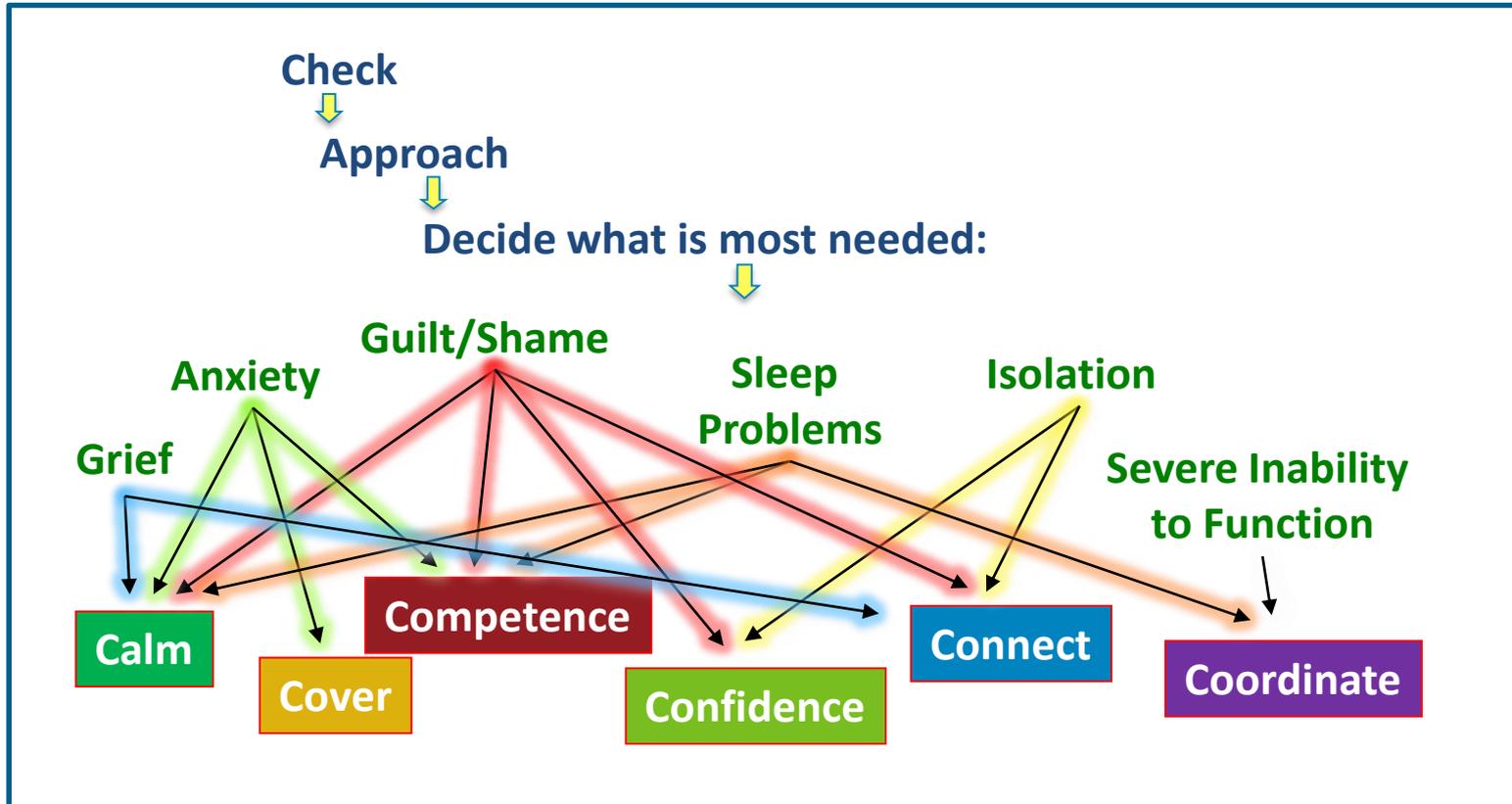
6. COMPETENCE

Restore effectiveness

7. CONFIDENCE

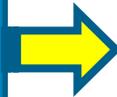
Restore self-esteem and hope

How Can You Use SFA?



Check: Be Aware of Red Flags

- **Not feeling in control**
- **Loss of cognitive abilities**
- **Intense feelings**
- **Feeling numb**
- **Inability to engage**
- **Sleep changes**
- **Avoidance**



Significant and/or persistent negative changes in behavior / habits

Uncharacteristic behavior

Making more mistakes

Becoming more isolated from others

Compulsive behavior

Check On Others

- Those affected by stress may be the last to recognize it
- Stigma can be an obstacle to asking for help
- Stress zones and needs change over time



Checking on Others

- Pick the right place and time to talk
- Begin with a casual two-way communication
- Find the right way to check on someone
- Check in on anniversaries or after reminders



SFA Group Questions

1

What are / have been your greatest challenges, hassles, or frustrations?

2

What are / have been your greatest rewards or successes?

3

What does it mean to be a in this team?

SFA Group Questions

Cover

- How has this affected your sense of safety?

Calm

- What changes have occurred regarding sleep or ability to keep calm?

Connect

- Has there been an impact on how you connect with others?

Competence

- Do you have any concerns about being able to handle anything?

Confidence

- Have you noticed any change in your confidence in:
 - yourself
 - leadership
 - mission
 - Other

What do you need ?
What can I/We do to help?

What Contributes to Each Zone in Pandemic?

READY

Safety:

Staying informed
Facing facts

Calm:

Changing expectations
Being patient
Keeping balanced

Connect:

Apart **But** Connected

Self-Efficacy:

Planning and adapting
Focusing on prevailing
Problem solving
Making routines
Seeking mentoring/training

Hope:

Living by values
Gratitude
Faith / philosophy actions

REACTING

Actions:

Short-term view / approach
Taking on too much
Ignoring drops in functioning
Not changing expectations
Not checking in with others
Underestimating needs
Not adapting self-care
Overriding concern of others
Self-medicating
Lack of routine
Unhelpful thoughts / habits
Stigma

INJURED

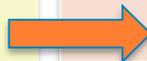
Actions:

Continuation or increase in yellow zone actions
Stuck in unhelpful patterns
More disengaged / isolated
Overdoing without balance
Underdoing what is needed

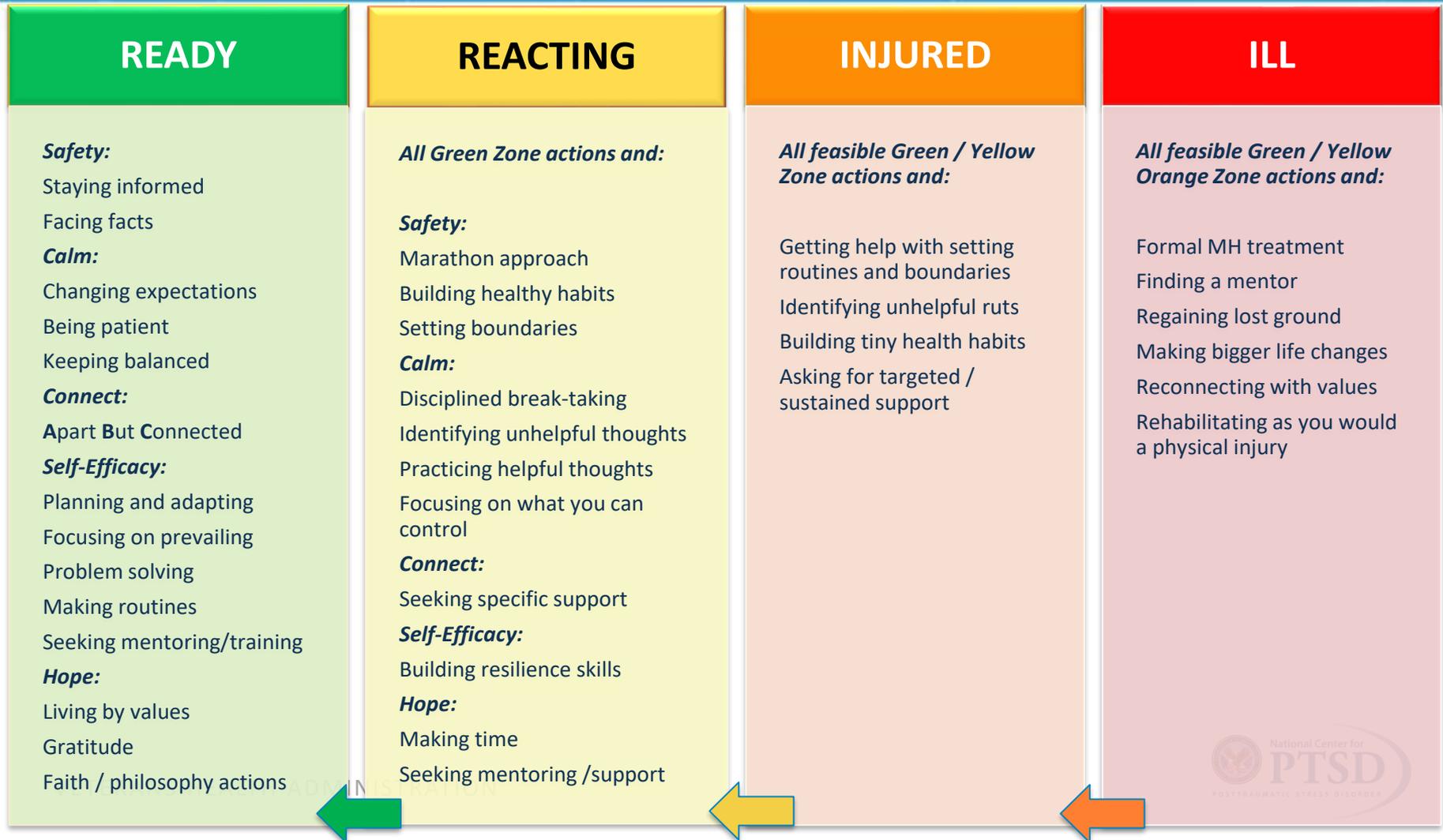
ILL

Actions:

Continuation or increase in orange zone actions
Not seeking help / expertise



Prioritizing Self-Care Actions Towards the Green Zone



Cover Self-Care Actions

- Actively seek information
- Get an accurate understanding of risks in order to plan
- Educate loved ones about activities / risks
- Get help with personal responsibilities
- Self-monitor for stress reactions
- Plan for regular check-ins with coworkers
- Making contingency plans for different scenarios



Cover Actions: Coworker Support

- Provide information on how the organization is working to keep employees safe
- Elicit needs and suggestions
- Provide information on keeping oneself safe
- Brainstorm and problem solve solutions
- Help reduce anything that make the person feel unsafe
- Brief staff regularly about changes in practice / strategies / resources / events



Calm Self-Care Actions

Prioritize
simple
preferred
strategies
to use
daily:

Breathing

Exercise

Yoga

Social support

Reflection/meditation/yoga/prayer

Focus
on:

Whatever helps you to keep focused on the present

Being realistic

Planning for long term

Acceptance

What you're grateful for

Adjusting beliefs that don't serve you in this context

Helpful thoughts and habits



Calm Actions: Coworker Support

- Mentor
- Give information
- Communicate calmly
- Listen empathically
- Validate concerns
- Distract
- Acknowledge / praise
- More flexibility
- Encourage breaks
- Assist with practical needs



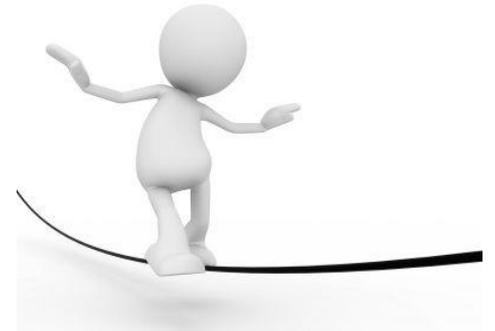
Calm Actions: Loss

- If you don't know what to say, stay present, stay quiet and listen
- Be authentic
- Take things off the person's plate so they have time to grieve
- Offer a menu of options of what you can provide
- Provide ways to honor the loss
- Believe in the person
- Check in over time



Connect Self-Care Actions

- Seek out contact
- Be open to different types of support
- Discipline yourself to have conversations
- Reprioritize your schedule
- Find creative ways to engage in social activities
- Connect with others around resilience actions
- Help others as you can



Connect Actions: Coworker Support

- Open communication with co-workers
- Check in regularly
- Offer different types of social support (practical, inclusion, emotional).
- If someone has retreated, find ways to indirectly include them
- Help problem-solve obstacles to connection
- Keep calling, texting, and talking with co-workers
- Assist with any negative social influences



Competence Self-Care Actions

- Focus on what is most needed
- Shift expectations
- Learn from others
- Create routines
- Be flexible
- Re-prioritize
- Evaluate the absolute risk
- Proceed with life's necessities
- Learn or practice resilience skills



Competence Actions: Coworker Support

- Remind of strategies and skills that have worked before
- Encourage active coping
- Help problem-solve and set achievable goals
- Give extra training / mentoring
- Help “recalibrate” expectations/goals
- Connect to community resources



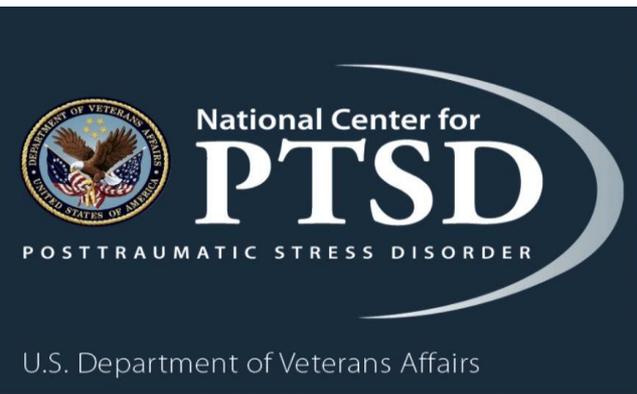
Confidence Self-Care Actions

- Use small triumphs to build confidence.
- If you have doubts, talk with mentors, friends, or spiritual guides, or read more self-help books or articles
- Don't push yourself to "process" the situation in any particular time frame, but if something triggers you, give yourself time
- Use the wisdom gained from experiences to reconfirm your values, make changes in your life, or help others

Confidence Actions: Coworker Support

- Support each other and remind each other of strengths
- Focus on core values, priorities
- Look to learn from each situation
- Look for any meaningful elements of the situation
- Find ways to enhance gratitude
- Mentor or recommend seeking out mentoring
- Honor and make meaning of losses
- Reframe guilt and self-defeating statements
- Be willing to talk with them as many times as they need





WWW.PTSD.VA.GOV

ADVANCING SCIENCE AND PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF TRAUMATIC STRESS

Information from the National Center for PTSD related to Covid-19

AVAILABLE NOW OR SOON AT

WWW.PTSD.VA.GOV/COVID

- Managing Stress
- Managing Healthcare Workers' Stress
- Providers and Community Leaders
- Mental Health Providers
- Leadership: Supporting Employees
- Helpful Thinking
- Supporting Others
- Grief



PTSD Consultation Program

FOR PROVIDERS WHO TREAT VETERANS

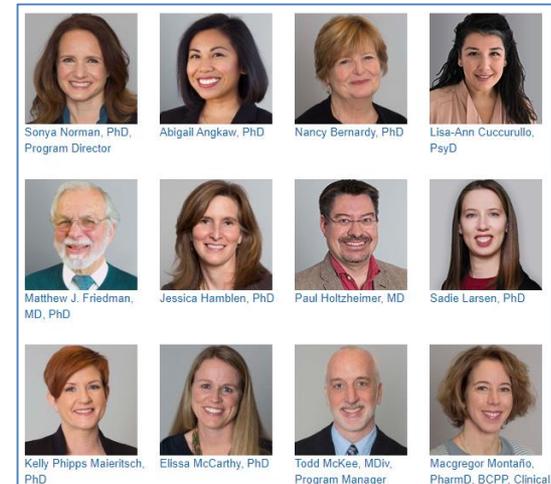
866-948-7880 or PTSDconsult@va.gov

PREVIOUS LECTURE

Treating PTSD During the COVID-19 Virus Outbreak

A panel of expert clinicians from the PTSD Consultation Program provide suggestions and resources.

Presented on March 18, 2020



PTSD Consultation Program Team

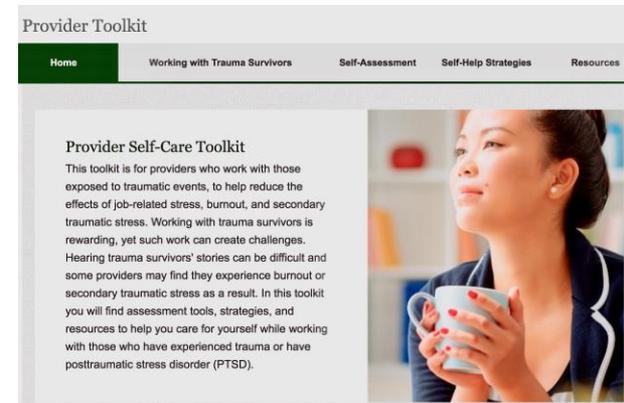
Recording and slides available at: www.ptsd.va.gov/consult



Other Potential Resources

The following resources may be helpful:

- [PTSD Provider Resilience Toolkit](#)
- [PTSD Coach mobile app](#)
- [Mindfulness Coach mobile app](#)
- [PTSD Coach online](#)
- VA's [Moving Forward](#) (Problem-Solving website or mobile app)
- [Skills for Psychological Recovery \(SPR\) Online Course](#)





SPEAK
with expert
PTSD clinicians



E-MAIL
PTSDconsult@
va.gov



CALL
(866) 948-7880



ACCESS
free clinical
resources



PTSD Consultation Program
FOR PROVIDERS WHO TREAT VETERANS

About the Consultants

- Experienced senior psychologists, psychiatrists, pharmacists, and other health professionals who treat Veterans with PTSD
- Available to consult on everything from toughest clinical scenarios to general PTSD questions

Ask about:

- Evidence-based treatment
- Medications
- Clinical management
- Resources
- Assessment
- Referrals
- Collaborating with VA on Veterans' care
- Developing a PTSD treatment program

Available Resources www.ptsd.va.gov/consult

- Free continuing education
- Videos, educational handouts, and manuals
- PTSD-related publications
- PTSD and trauma assessment and screening tools
- Mobile apps, and more



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**Please enter your
questions in the Q&A box
and be sure to include your
email address.**

The lines are muted to avoid background noise.



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(866) 948-7880 or PTSDconsult@va.gov

Employee Education System

VHA TRAIN

Welcome users of VHA TRAIN!

To obtain continuing education credit please
return to www.vha.train.org after the
lecture.

TRAIN help desk: VHATRAN@va.gov



PTSD Consultation Program FOR PROVIDERS WHO TREAT VETERANS

(866) 948-7880 or PTSDconsult@va.gov

CEU Process for users of VHA TRAIN (non-VA)

Registration → Attendance → Evaluation → Certificate



*Register in
TRAIN.*



*Listen to the
lecture.*



*Return to
TRAIN for
evaluation.*



*Follow the
directions to
print
certificate.*

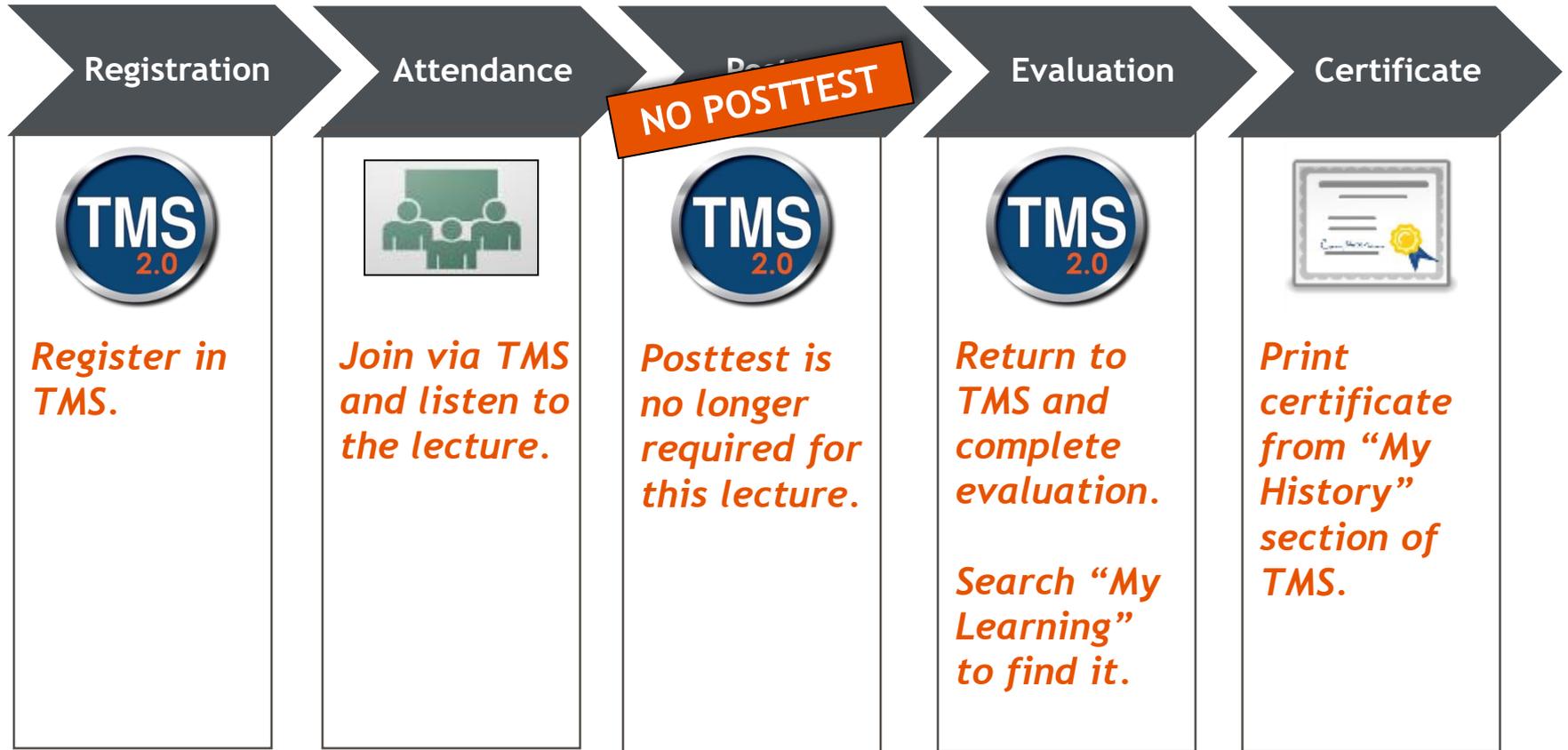
TRAIN help desk: **VHATRIN@va.gov**



PTSD Consultation Program FOR PROVIDERS WHO TREAT VETERANS

(866) 948-7880 or PTSDconsult@va.gov

CEU Process (for VA employees)





PTSD Consultation Program

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PTSDconsult@va.gov



(866) 948-7880



www.ptsd.va.gov/consult



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UPCOMING TOPICS

SAVE THE DATE: Third Wednesday of the Month from 2-3PM (ET)

PLEASE NOTE : Topics are subject to change in the coming months

May 20 Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy for PTSD Candice Monson, PhD

June 17 *Using CogSmart with Veterans with PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury* Elizabeth Twamley, PhD

July 15 *How Do We Make Effective Treatment for PTSD More Effective?* Paula Schnurr, PhD

August 19 *Massed Treatment for Veterans with PTSD* Cynthia Yamokoski, PhD

September 16 *Treating Co-occurring PTSD and Anger* Leslie Morland, PhD

For more information and to subscribe to announcements and reminders go to www.ptsd.va.gov/consult