

# THE IMPACT OF RACIAL INJUSTICE

## Supporting Employees

Managers and supervisors have a special role to play in helping their employees adjust in healthy ways after a traumatic event, and during periods of prolonged stress. Here are some actions to consider, as the situation warrants.

### Moves you can make:

- › Don't try to "fix" the situation. You can't. Simply offering your support and making yourself available to employees is helpful.
- › Lower your expectations for a while. Know that they may have difficulty concentrating or making decisions for a time. Try to be compassionate, and see if there is some flexibility within your company's productivity goals to accommodate.
- › Acknowledge your own biases. Examine your own views on what has happened and determine the role that bias might play.
- › Review policies for flexibility in granting time off.
- › Be available for your employees. Let them know how to get in touch with you. Consider having "open office hours".
- › Offer specific, practical help. Try to be flexible with goals and deadlines whenever possible. Look into what your organization is offering for emotional support during this time, and try to accommodate schedules to let employees attend.
- › Outline your organization's values of diversity and inclusion. Let them know what your company is doing to uphold these values.
- › Avoid clichés or pat responses. Try phrases like, "My door is open if you would like to talk", or "This is a difficult time, and I want to support you."
- › Remind employees of resources available to them in the community and through their jobs, including the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

### Stay mindful of team dynamics:

- › Consider offering listening sessions to provide a safe space for employees to share and process their reactions. Promote these if they are being offered by your company for those who want to participate.
- › Be mindful that people hold all different perspectives. Don't assume that everyone feels the same way about the issues that are being raised and discussed in the aftermath of the event.
- › Model empathetic communication and deep listening. Ask open-ended questions to learn more about what employees are going through. Be understanding when employees exhibit an emotional reaction. Encourage these skills in your employees, too.
- › Monitor interactions for when they become "charged", escalated, or negative. If your team is virtual, check in with employees regularly and note any changes in tone or working relationships.

### Communicate with your team:

- › Acknowledge the situation directly, do not skirt around the issue. Do not make light of it, or minimize it. Recognize the deep emotions many people are experiencing.
- › Set the tone. Be aware that your employees may be looking to you to understand appropriate ways to interact in the workplace. Model openness and respectful interchange.

- › Know your policies on disruptions in the workplace, including discrimination, harassment, hostile work environment, and social media policies. Be mindful that you do not discipline employees simply for having different opinions or views from you. Consult with HR with questions or concerns.
- › Consult with HR or EAP if negativity increases or you are unsure of how to respond. A management consultation with an Employee Assistance Consultant (EAC) can help you talk through your concerns and formulate a response.

### Communication is a two-way process:

- › Approach employees directly to check in, and do so regularly. Don't wait for them to come to you.
- › Personally express your empathy and support. Let them know you are sorry for what has happened and you are there to support them in whatever way you can.
- › Ask them what need from you, what their biggest challenge is right now. Brainstorm solutions.
- › Listen actively. Show that you're listening by paraphrasing what you've heard, or asking open-ended questions to learn more. Challenge yourself to really hear without thinking about your response or adding a different perspective.
- › Respect their privacy. Don't force a conversation. Check in with your employee, but let it go if they are not interested in talking.

### Use the resources available to you as a manager

- › If you have concerns about how individual employees are reacting, or the effect on your workforce in general, call your EAP for a management consultation.
- › Your EAP offers wellness seminars that address topics like racial injustice, anxiety, resilience, and stress management.
- › Consider scheduling a critical incident stress-debriefing group, through the EAP.

### Take care of yourself

- › Monitor your own emotional reaction. Recognize when you are overwhelmed. Take a break when needed. Try activities or engaging in something meaningful to help refocus your thoughts to a neutral place for a time.
- › Know that there is no "right" way to feel. There is not one way to feel better, or cope with these complex emotions. Give yourself permission to feel the way you feel.
- › Be good to yourself, physically and emotionally. Remember how you've overcome challenges in the past, and use those skills to help get you through now. Try to eat a healthy diet, and remember that physical activity can be one of the best ways to ease emotional stress.
- › Reach out for support if you need it. The EAP can be a source of support for both managerial and personal concerns. It can provide professional help and connect you with resources for support in your community, and is completely confidential.

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