



Responding to “Overwhelm”

PURPOSE AND PREPARATION

Purpose: To create a space for acknowledging “overwhelm” and its impact as well as expressing emotion. Asking questions (versus not providing solutions) helps colleagues process their feelings, find ways to cope and problem-solve.

MAIN ACTIVITY: REFLECTING ON “OVERWHELM”, ITS IMPACT, AND WHAT HELPS

Identify the problem at hand that is causing frustration, disorientation, fear, confusion, or anger.

Explain: *I am here to listen as we figure out ways to manage things during this difficult time.*

QUESTIONS

Choose the questions that seem most relevant if there is not time for all the questions. **Always use one or more positive questions after you have allowed opportunity for participants to talk about fears, concerns, pain.** It is very important to end with a sense of positive possibility and hope even in very difficult situations. Toward the end you want to evoke a strong sense of connection and support.

- *What are your feelings about what’s happening? How are you affected by this situation?*
- *What has been the hardest thing for you?*
- *Who has helped you feel better when you feel down about this?*
- *Who can you talk with about your anxieties and concerns?*
- *What physical activities help you to feel better?*
- *What strengths have you seen in yourself and in others as people get through this situation?*
- *What gives you hope at difficult times?*
- *When in your week do you need to focus on self care?*
- *What strength can you tap into right now to help cope with this situation?*
- *What is most challenging to you in taking care of yourself?*
- *What is the kindest thing you can do for yourself right now?*
- *Do you have intentional practices to interrupt thoughts of hopelessness or anxiety?*
- *What helps you remember you are never alone?*
- *What is your favorite music for lifting your spirit?*
- *What are 3 things you are grateful for in your life?*
- *What strengths, resources, and support do you have that would help as you face this situation?*
- *What is something that helps you feel hopeful in this moment?*
- *What is one activity you could do to help take your mind off things for awhile?*
- *What can we do to support you? What can your coworkers do to support you?*
- *How can we support each other through this difficult time?*
- *What are you proud of in your response to this difficult time?*

REFERENCE

Reference: This content was adapted from *Circle Forward* by Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis.