3. Create easy access formal programming that supports recovery from organizational trauma

Research shows that organizations, which were supportive of developing new or enhancing existing training programs are better positioned to have their staff recognize the symptoms of trauma. Formal programming that your organization can provide includes:

- Employee Assistance Programs
- Formal counselling services
- Extended health benefits that support long-term recovery
- Faith-based services
- Crisis lines/centres
- Critical Incident Debriefing

In smaller communities, where anonymity is a challenge, try to find creative ways to support the needs of that community:

- Bring in outside support (e.g Victim Services or a mediator)
- Make online counselling available
- Suggest an online peer-to-peer group
- Provide local and online resources

Critical Incident Debriefing: Often conducted in the days following an incident, critical incident debriefing provides opportunities for responders to discuss what they saw or experienced and how they responded to the incident.

4. Encourage the creation and maintenance of informal supports amongst employees

Giving employees the means to take care of themselves can be very powerful. Studies show that organizations can support their employees by funding a community focused event (e.g. a team BBQ or picnic). This can promote a sense of community that may lead to increased resilience and employee retention.

5. Collaborate with organizations and programs to provide broad-scale programming and support

Aim to connect with other organizations that encounter organizational trauma and collaborate with them to develop multifaceted, large scale responses to minimize the stigma around organizational trauma and promote employee care.

Organizational Support for First Responders, Receivers and Supporters

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Epidemiological studies have found that first responders (police, fire ambulance), receivers (nurses, doctors, counsellors, social workers, etc), and supporters are especially at risk for acute and chronic health impairment while at work.

Timely access to treatment, mental health care, and other programs designed to reduce the impact of trauma following an incident or series of incidents can improve health and well-being and reduce the psychosocial and economic costs associated with occupational trauma.

What responsibilities does my organization have to care for employees experiencing occupational trauma?

Chronic exposure to occupational stress that is left unchecked, may lead to negative psychological and social outcomes for the responder, their employees and family, and may drastically reduce the length of their career. Other impacts can range from PTSD, to chronic illness, and sometimes to suicide.

What can your organization do to support employees experiencing occupational trauma?

The well-being of employees is paramount to the well-being of your organization. Employee trauma or severe illness must be recognized as an organizational priority. Organizational support is one of the key factors in psychosocial, emotional, and physical recovery for those impacted by trauma on the job.

1. Promote a work culture that understands and supports those experiencing trauma

Organizations that make an effort to reduce the negativity around mental illness in the workplace are well positioned to help their staff. Actively working to change the culture in your organization to one that understands that trauma can happen and that it can affect anyone.

- Educate employees about the signs and symptoms of occupational trauma
- Promote a message of diversity, which accepts the histories and potential traumas that everyone carries into their workday
- Encourage acceptance and curiosity around the ways in which different cultural groups express pain and find ways to heal

These questions are common and it may be hard to shake them off. Remember that your actions are appreciated and that under challenging circumstances, you did the best that you could.

Trauma: physical, psychological or mental change that occurs in individuals who witnessed the pain or suffering of others

Symptoms include:

- Mood swings
- Panic attacks
- Sleep difficulties
- Depressed mood
- Invasive thoughts
- Social withdrawal
- Flashbacks

2. Provide training that promotes effective self-care practices throughout employee careers

Organizations that continue to discuss and train for employee well-being and self-care throughout their careers are supporting employee and organizational health.

- Provide yearly workshops on self-care and organizational trauma
- Promote self-care on a daily basis. Encourage employees to:
  - Take breaks throughout the day
  - Check in with each other
  - Eat healthily
  - Learn how to talk about challenges or fears

Communicate the message that trauma and healing can look different for each individual. There is no single way to recover from a traumatic event.