

Stress Measures for Helpers

Support for helpers within respective organizations

1. Set work goals

- Clarify the importance and goals of jobs
- Keep daily reports, diary or a note of activities to organize thoughts

2. Maintain the pace of life

- Get enough sleep, nutrition and water

3. Take rest when possible

4. Figure out how to get refreshed

- Take a deep breath, close eyes, meditate, do stretches
- Take a walk, do exercise, listen to music, have meals, take a bath, etc.

5. Socialize as a way of relieving stress

- Contact family, friends, etc. when possible (preferably people unrelated to work)

Self-support of helpers

a. Avoid overworking

- Know your limits and adjust the pace of activities

b. Be aware of stress

- Manage your own health and detect stress symptoms at an early stage

c. Try to relieve stress

- Relaxation, body care, refreshment
- Communicate with people outside work (family, friends, etc.)

d. Avoid isolation

- Work as a pair or a team

e. See things differently

Source: Prepared based on the "Fukushima Psychological Care Manual," Fukushima Mental Health and Welfare Centre, 2012

"Fukushima Psychological Care Manual" by the Fukushima Mental Health and Welfare Centre provides guidelines regarding stress measures for helpers.

Helpers' self-support efforts include avoiding overworking and being aware of their own stress, etc. It might be difficult to avoid overworking given the situation they are in, but it is important for individuals to know their own limits so that they can adjust the pace of activities and to hand off work to someone else in order to avoid meeting too many affected people in a day. Having stress symptoms is not something to be ashamed of but an important clue for self-health checks. It is necessary to manage health by oneself and notice any symptoms at an early stage. Relaxation, body care, refreshment, and communication with people outside work (family, friends, etc.) are effective in relieving stress. Isolation should be avoided as much as possible in a situation where one can easily become stressed out, so it would be necessary to work as a pair or a team and to have opportunity to share experience (disaster situations individual helpers witnessed and their feelings) with coworkers on a periodic basis or to be given instructions from senior workers, etc. It is natural that individuals cannot change everything on their own, especially in difficult situations after disasters, so it is better to rate one's own activities positively and there is no need at all to have negative thoughts considering not being fit or competent for the job.

The manual also cites some concrete ways to provide care for helpers within respective organizations.

- Feeling guilty about taking a rest alone while others are working is a sign of stress.
- When noticing any physical or psychological symptoms, consult with a superior or coworkers at an early stage.
- Exchange words with coworkers as often as possible to encourage each other.
- Be careful about one's own health and coworkers' health and tell the relevant person and the supervisor if someone has too much workload.

(Related to p.154 of Vol. 1, "Support for Helpers: Three Stages of Care")

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