

# June Wellness Action Message



## Quarterly Theme:

Mental Wellbeing: Prevention & Intervention

**June's Message:** Navigating Secondary Trauma

## What is Secondary Trauma?

Secondary traumatic stress – stress reactions and symptoms resulting from exposure to another individual's traumatic experiences, rather than from exposure directly to a traumatic event. *Secondary trauma has been researched in first responders, nurses and physicians, mental health care workers, and children of traumatized parents.*

## What are the Signs of Secondary Traumatic Stress?

- Excessively worry or fear about something bad happening
- Easily startled, or “on guard” all of the time
- Physical signs of stress (e.g. racing heart)
- Nightmares or recurrent thoughts about the traumatic situation
- The feeling that others' trauma is yours

## How to Navigate Secondary Traumatic Stress:

### **Get support from team members: Develop a Buddy System**

In a buddy system, two colleagues partner together to support each other, and monitor each other's stress, workload, and safety.

- Get to know each other. Talk about background, interests, hobbies, and family. Identify each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- Keep an eye on each other. Try to work in the same location if you can.
- Set up times to check-in with each other. Listen carefully and share experiences and feelings. Acknowledge tough situations and recognize accomplishments, even small ones.
- Offer to help with basic needs such as sharing supplies and transportation.
- Monitor each other's workloads. Encourage each other to take breaks. Share opportunities for stress relief (rest, routine sleep, exercise, and deep breathing).
- Communicate your buddy's basic needs and limits to leadership – make your buddy feel “safe” to speak up.

## **Self-Care Techniques**

- Write in a journal.
- Talk to family, friends, supervisors, and teammates about your feelings and experiences.
- Practice breathing and relaxation techniques.
- Maintain a healthy diet and get adequate sleep and exercise.
- Know that it is okay to draw boundaries and say “no.”
- Avoid or limit caffeine and use of alcohol.

### **It is important to remind yourself:**

- It is not selfish to take breaks.
- The needs of survivors are not more important than your own needs and well-being.
- Working all of the time does not mean you will make your best contribution.
- There are other people who can help in the response.

Source: [CDC - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

### **A reminder about Sand Creek Employee Assistance Program Resources**

Sand Creek Employee Assistance Program (EAP), offers short-term mental health counseling and in-the-moment support for: Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, Resilience, Self-Care and Emotional Wellness. They also offer a variety of other resources including legal and financial counseling, medical advocacy and more.

Sand Creek is available for all employees and anyone in the household, and can be accessed 24/7/365 online at <https://myassistanceprogram.com/sandcreek/> or calling 1-888-243-5744.