

**Strategies for stress management**

**Before:**

* Knowing about potential stresses and risks to your well-being as a lay-counsellor
* Maintaining healthy life habits (enough rest, exercise and good nutrition)
* Being aware of your resources for coping
* Honestly assessing your readiness to help others in any given situation (e.g. evaluating your own health and life situation to know if you are able to take on a helping role at this time)
* Attending briefing or training sessions to prepare for your role
* Having a clear job description
* Having clear lines of communication with supervisors and managers
* Knowing what supports your agency/organization provides and how to access it
* Knowing your team members and developing supportive relationships with them

**During:**

* Keeping reasonable working hours
* Having adequate working conditions wherever possible
* Watching out for signs of stress in oneself and team members and taking action to prevent more problems from developing
* Being willing to seek help from a supervisor or other support when you feel your stress levels are high, or you encountered a particularly difficult situation
* Being respectful, patient and understanding with other team members, particularly when working in very difficult situations
* Keeping reasonable expectations of what you can do and not do in your work
* Attending supervision sessions and seeking help from supervisors when needed
* Attending any support sessions or team meetings to share experiences and feelings as the work is going on
* Leaving work behind at the end of the day or mission
* Taking your rest and relaxation
* Paying attention to and attending to your personal and family needs
* Talk with team members, friends and loved ones who can support you

**After:**

* Taking time to reflect on your experience and come to peace with any difficult aspects of it
* Making an honest appraisal with a supervisor about your work, acknowledging what you were able to do well and any limits you encountered
* Monitoring yourself and team members for signs of stress that may come some time after working in a particularly difficult situation or with a difficult client
* Attending any support sessions or team meetings to debrief, reflect and share feelings and experiences
* Seeking help and support (using resources provided by your organization/agency or other sources) for any difficult emotions or signs of stress that you may feel after helping others
* Being willing to accept referral to a counsellor or professional if you or others notice stress symptoms taking over
* Take time to rest and relax after particularly challenging work periods, before resuming other work duties