***Protocol for the Hot Walk and Talk***

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This protocol applies when there has been no physical injury and the person is stable enough in the aftermath to proceed. In the event that the individual has been physically injured or is in shock you would need to follow emergency procedures and get the appropriate immediate medical resources.

This protocol is designed to provide helpful first aid immediately after a team member experiences a particularly distressing or disturbing incident and is undergoing a completely normal stress reaction. This is something either supervisors or peers can offer each other and you will consider what would work best for you in your particular circumstances.

Remember that when we are experiencing a high stress response our body is in the flight, fight or freeze state and we are flooding with stress hormones and all the physical, emotional and cognitive responses that go with that. So, our first response introduces safety and containment for the person.

The following steps in the process are typically helpful:

1. Go to the individual, ensure that they are physically out of danger, and ask them to come walk with you.
2. Walk away from the area where the incident occurred and toward a neutral or safe area (if you can get outside that can be even more grounding).
3. Walk beside them and set a pace that is brisk enough to engage the individual and help them discharge some of the distress… as the walk proceeds you may find that they naturally slow the pace – let them progressively have more control over the pace as the debriefing proceeds.
4. Bring a bottle of water and have them drink the water as you walk
5. Let them know that they are safe now and you are here to support them as they move through this absolutely normal response to high stress.
6. Ask them to tell you what happened in their own words, if they seem stuck in the incident, prompt them to move on with the narrative by asking “and then what happened”. You want to help them move through the whole narrative from beginning to the end – until they get to the present where they are walking with you in safety and are no longer at risk.
7. After you have gone through this initial debrief you may work in an environment where you are required to complete an incident report. If this is the case, go with the individual and ask them how you can help in completing the report. They may want you to type in the information as they dictate it, or they may simply appreciate your presence while they complete the report.
8. Remember to remind them to focus on their breathing and open posture to help them deescalate from the stress response – especially after you have stopped walking and may be standing or sitting.
9. After the initial debrief and report (if required), ask the person what they would find helpful now? Do they want to phone a family member, get a sandwich, take a break, go back to work? They need to have control over their choices while attending to their needs.
10. Let the individual know that you will remain available to them and encourage them to access addition supports that may be available if they would find them helpful (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs, counselling, other community resources)

Following, and sometimes parallel to, this immediate first aid response, there may be additional steps needed from an institutional perspective. These may include:

* 􏰃  The debriefer stays with the affected person, and asks a colleague to notify the supervisor about the incident. The debriefer can provide updates to the supervisor as needed.
* 􏰃  The supervisor speaks with the affected person(s) and assesses whether the person should remain at work following the incident. The debriefer or supervisor assists with making travel arrangements if the affected person is not in a condition to drive home. If the affected person goes home early, the supervisor phones the affected person to ensure that they arrived home safely.
* 􏰃  The debriefer emails a summary of the incident to the supervisor, based on the information gathered from the affected person. The supervisor may also be responsible for submitting paperwork.
* 􏰃  The supervisor updates other staff in the office about the incident, as needed.
* 􏰃  The supervisor works with the affected person(s) to discuss any case management or other relevant decisions in relation to the incident.
* 􏰃  The supervisor will check-in periodically with the affected person and continue to offer support in the weeks that follow.