Trauma-Informed Toolbox Strategy Session:
Navigating Fear and Worry in the Workplace

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Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase; just take the first step.

(Martin Luther King Jr.)
All of Our Realities

*Experiencing the reality of the dual pandemics...*

- Continuous news and social media reports
- Violence, brutality, racial injustice
- Increased numbers of COVID-19 cases
- Ongoing and rapid changes in protocols, directives, etc.
- Uncertainty about the future
What is Worry?

Verb
• Give way to **anxiety or unease**; allow one’s mind to dwell on **difficulty or troubles**.

Noun
• A state of **anxiety and uncertainty** over actual or potential problems.

*Short-term worry is a normal and healthy response. However, chronic worry can trigger short and long-term fear/stress responses.*

(Brosschot, 2017; Holland, 2018; Oxford, 2020)
Fear Response

When we perceive something as a threat, the amygdala activates and generates a fear response—commonly referred to as the “fight, flight, or freeze” or stress response.

YouTube: The Fight, Flight, Freeze Response

(Burke-Harris, 2014; Klinic, 2013; Pessoa, 2011)
Re-Traumatization & Current Reality

Threatened

Isolated

Powerless

Unseen + Unheard

Anxiety
Worry
Fear
Reactivity
Stress

(Jennings, n.d.; ITTIC, 2020)

Community Care Corner

Health Center Staff
Wellness Resources 2021
Self, colleagues, patients, families, health center, community...

What are you noticing?
Managing Worry and Fear

**Health & Wellness**
- Get plenty of sleep
- Eat well-balanced meals
- Limit alcohol and stimulants
- Loosen up your muscles

**Physical Activity**
- Walking
- Structured exercise classes
- Playing a sport
- Anything that moves you!

Research indicates that our thoughts, feelings, and health behaviors are closely linked. One of the things that is within our control is deciding to care for our health and wellbeing.

Research shows that physical activity reduces the stress response by increasing endorphins, decreasing stress hormones, as well as improving calmness and sleep.

(Nunez, 2020)
Managing Worry and Fear

Relaxation Techniques

- Deep breathing
- Mindfulness – the ability to know what is happening in your head at any given moment without getting carried away by it
- Meditation – a mental exercise that trains attention and awareness

Research has shown mediation and mindfulness can help reduce stress, anxiety, help reduce false fight-flight-freeze responses, and improve sleep.

(Harris, 2015; Nunez, 2020; Thorpe & Link, 2020)
Trauma-Informed Considerations for Worry & Fear

• What could increase yours and others’ feelings of safety? Connection with others is a means of promoting emotional safety.

• Set up a routine for yourself that includes connecting with others and stick to it. Consistency promotes trustworthiness which can also increase feelings of being anchored and grounded.

• With many things out of our control at this time; what do you still have control over? What choices do you still have? What choices can you remind others that they have?

• How can you collaborate with those you work with to respond in TI ways?

• How can access empowerment in yourself and in others by noticing what is working and going-well? What we focus on gets bigger!
Values/Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach: Responding to Worry and Fear

- Safety
  - Check-in with a co-worker
  - Provide opportunity for support/debriefing
  - Make a change to the physical space

- Collaboration
  - Seek ideas from others
  - Complete tasks together
  - Provide formal opportunity for feedback

- Trustworthiness
  - Let others know what to expect
  - Provide clear information
  - Use reflective listening strategies

- Empowerment
  - Recognize strengths & capacity
  - Acknowledge what’s working
  - Build a realistic sense of hope

- Choice
  - Give even small options where possible
  - Inform others of choices available
  - Prioritize priorities of others
How well are you navigating worry and fear?

1 = not well   5 = half-way there   10 = very well

What will it take to get just one point higher on the scale?
Additional Resources on Worry & Fear

- CDC – [Coping with Stress](#)
- Chopra – [The Side Effects of Worrying and What to Do Instead](#)
- Cigna – [Coping with the Impact of Racial Injustice](#)
- Declutter the Mind (video) – [5-Minute Guided Meditation for Mindfulness](#)
- Happify (video) – [Why Mindfulness is a Superpower](#)
- Harvard University Health Services – [Managing Fears and Anxiety Around the Coronavirus](#)
- Help Guide - [Coronavirus Anxiety: Coping with Stress, Fear, and Worry](#)
- Help Guide – [How To Stop Worrying](#)
- National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health – [Meditation: In Depth](#)
- NYS Office of Mental Health - [Managing Anxiety in an Anxiety-Provoking Situation](#)