

SUPPORTING PERSONNEL FOLLOWING TRAINING EXERCISES

Training exercises are a helpful way to learn your job and prepare for challenging situations. They help us “train like we fight” and can provide an intense, simulated environment where you role play and think through difficult scenarios. Having an approach to help you decompress after the exercise can help you get the most out of the experience and take care of yourself in the process.

During a training exercise, it’s normal to get a surge of adrenaline and a heightened sense of your environment. These reactions can help you participate more effectively in the activity and increase your ability to learn. Use this opportunity to take in as much information as possible because you will remember things better during this time.

After a training exercise, it is normal to have a level of arousal or ramped up feeling that persists for a period of time. For most people, this will gradually diminish after the exercise. However, for some people the “letting down” part can feel more challenging. Also, those of us who have experienced a real life version of the training exercise or other intense or traumatic experiences may find the adrenaline keeps flowing well after the training exercise ends. Finding ways to decompress after an exercise has ended is important.

There are a number of things you can do to take care of yourself after an intense training exercise:

- Take a deep breath or find another activity that helps you feel calmer.
- Remind yourself that even if you felt a sense of being unsafe during the exercise, you and your loved ones are safe now.

Having an approach to help you decompress after a training exercise can help you get the most out of the experience and take care of yourself in the process.

- Talk with your buddies or teammates about the exercise experiences; sharing experiences can be helpful and allows people to decompress.
- Listen to other people who want to talk about the exercise; even if you are feeling fine, it might help someone else to have someone they can talk to.
- Make opportunities for people that went through the exercise to informally talk and debrief together as a group over food and snacks, if possible. Talking informally or socially in a group setting allows people to share their experiences, get feedback, learn from one another, and unwind.
- If you try the methods above and still find yourself feeling stress that is interfering with your activities at work or home, talk with a co-worker or supervisor. You can also go to your local medical clinic or healthcare provider to talk with someone who will assist you in getting support.
- If you see someone having difficulty calming down, ask how they are doing and listen to what they have to say. Avoid telling them how they should be feeling or providing simple reassurances like “everything will be fine.” Instead, remind them about the ideas above. If they are still having difficulty calming down, offer to take them to their healthcare provider for additional support.