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## Buffering Stress – Being a Support Person

Emotions are natural, necessary, and healthy. A show of emotion — crying, withdrawing, fidgeting, frustration — does not in itself require attention unless the person expresses a need for further support or it disrupts another person's process. If you feel drawn to reach out, pause and check in with yourself first. What are you reacting to, and why? Does the person's behavior or expression seem understandable given the setting and context? Is their expression of feeling getting in the way of someone else's needs?

It is worth remembering that an emotional expression may seem entirely unremarkable to the person witnessing it, yet feel overwhelming to the person experiencing it — simply because it took them by surprise. Equally, a show of emotion may feel familiar and manageable to the person experiencing it, yet uncomfortable for the person witnessing it, perhaps because it is new to them, activates an urge to help, or stirs their own past experiences. We are striving for an environment where people are emotionally and physically safe enough to feel, grieve, and connect as needed.

### How to offer support

- I noticed you left the space. You are welcome here, and I also wanted you to know we have a dedicated space if you would like to use that.
- Your emotions are welcome here, and if you need any support or hydration, there is a room.....
- Can I get you some water, Kleenex, a fan, or other support right now?
- Often just being present - physically and emotionally - is enough.
- People often just need a little time. Be aware of the situation and resist the urgency to fix.
- Are you ok to walk/drive, or would you like me to (help or get someone to help you)?

### Supportive Phrases:

- How can I show up for you in this moment?
- I can hear that.
- That makes total sense to me.
- I don't know the right words but I am hearing how much...
- Our bodies are amazing keepers of our stories
- I am open to a hug if you would like one.
- I am here with you.
- You don't have to share or explain anything right now.
- Would you like to share their name?
- Is there anything I can do to help you feel more cared for right now?

## A Few Helpful Practices:

### Moving your body in any way your body likes to move

- Taking a walk
- A big stretch
- Swaying
- Shaking out your hands or body
- Tensing a muscle group, then releasing
- Dance

### Hydration

- Drink plenty of water or tea. More than you think you need in times of stress.

### Sensations

- Peppermint, lavender, or other comforting tastes or smells
- A smooth pebble or piece of fabric in your pocket
- Find nature to look at
- Soothing music

### Breathing

- Model, by doing it yourself, breathing when someone else is experiencing stress
- Try box breathing

