

Supporting Your Team

A guide for providing support within your team or department while navigating world conflicts.

Context

There exists significant diversity of thought related to current events in the Middle East. Some individuals feel the impact personally as events represent a threat to the existence or way of life of their community, while others feel passionately from a commitment to social activism. This is accompanied by an intensity of emotion and at times a discomfort with or intolerance of others who do not share one's views. This poses a significant challenge to discourse surrounding these topics, even in the workplace. More importantly, it threatens our community with the alienation of those from other backgrounds or with divergent views.

Goals

Identifying Departmental goals ought to guide your practices in providing support. Your goals might include:

- Maintaining a supportive and non-fractured environment in which all faculty and staff members can work together, despite potential differences in background or thought.
- Supporting your colleagues who may feel distressed and vulnerable, as humans, no matter their views.
- Achieving these goals while remaining mindful of meeting regular responsibilities and professional goals.

Recommendations

- Acknowledge, when possible, the ongoing challenges that we are living through and note that staff and faculty are aiming to work amidst tragedies that may be directly impacting them and their families. In acknowledging this, express hope that others are taking care of themselves in whichever way(s) they might need to.
 - For example, when leading a meeting, making a brief statement acknowledging this at the beginning of meetings, without necessarily making every acknowledgement into an open space for dialogue, can be helpful.
 - Make similar acknowledgments, even subtly, in email exchanges (*ie: Including "I hope this email finds you well and you have been taking care of yourself" as an opening statement in emails*).
 - Check in informally on individuals within your department or team as needed. Check in particularly on those whom you know to be personally impacted by the events in the Middle East (*ie: having family living overseas who are being directly impacted by the conflicts*).
- Balance the need to continue to address these ongoing realities, while not losing focus on the needs of patients and the responsibilities of the department.

- Validate concerns or emotions that are raised to you by others. Active listening, empathy and validation can be very supportive to those struggling.
- Reach out to colleagues if they seem withdrawn or appear to be struggling. You don't have to have answers or even the same viewpoint, but everyone can be empathic when witnessing the pain of others.
- Encourage colleagues to reach out to available resources if they may benefit from additional support:
 - For staff and faculty experiencing distress that would benefit from an individual session surrounding coping with these current, traumatic events, encourage outreach to the [Weill Cornell Medicine Employee Assistance Program](#) or to the [NewYork-Presbyterian Employee Assistance Program, CopeNYP](#) (copenyp@med.cornell.edu), to schedule a session.