



Managing Staff While Under Attack

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Part of the “Life in Congress” Project by:



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Goals of this Program

- Support and empower you, your team and your family
- Help understand your personal emotion, physical and cognitive reactions
- Offer ways to help you cope with what you've experienced and what comes next
- Provide tools and ideas support your coworkers as they deal with the experience

Goals of this Program

- Suggest some ways to support your families
- Offer personal, family and team safety precautions and preparations
- Identify resources for support and other key tools for managing this crisis and serving the public effectively
- Suggestions for systemic change

What You Have Been Through

- A serious and sustained threat to your personal safety and possibly your life
- A threat to your friends, coworkers and your supervisor or boss
- Dangerous and menacing mobs attacking and invading a space you thought was safe, even sacred and the place where you or your colleagues or family work on a daily basis
- A failure of the security system and personnel who were supposed to protect you
- An attack by your fellow citizens against their own government and Capitol building in an attempt to disrupt a free and fair election
- Racist, antisemitic, sexist and homophobic language and explicit threats against individuals of color and diversity
- The wanton destruction and theft of public and personal property
- Possible active or tacit support for the attacks from some who work on the hill
- Ongoing threats of continued violence
- Dealing with all of this and COVID-19 too

What Your Families and Friends Have Been Through

- Worry about your safety during the event and a sense of helplessness
- Worry about their own safety
- Anger, helplessness, frustration, disappointment, vulnerability, uncertainty
- Many unanswered questions about what happens next
- A need for more information, structure, support and specific actions

Emotional Reactions You and Your Peers May Be Experiencing

Anger, Fear, Anxiety, Frustration, Confusion, Outrage, Deep sadness, Loss, Loneliness, Isolation, Vulnerability, Helplessness, Abandonment, Injustice, Feeling overwhelmed, Not understood, Guilt, Shame, Resentment, Nightmares, Intrusive thoughts, Irritability, Depression, Reduced motivation, A loss of purpose or passion, and many other shared and personal reactions or changes.

Physical Reactions

- Sick to your stomach
- Heart racing or pounding
- Blood pressure increase
- Trembling, shaking, nervousness
- Feeling faint
- Exhaustion and weakness, both emotionally and physically
- Headaches
- Difficulty sleeping at night or possibly a desire just to sleep during the day
- Changes in appetite
- Grinding teeth at night
- Fidgeting or nervous habits
- A distant stare

Cognitions and Behaviors

- Repeated or intrusive thoughts or memories of the events
- Recurring fears or thoughts about possible future threats
- Hypervigilance
- Difficulty concentrating or working
- Trying to make sense of the senseless
- Feeling disorganized
- Trouble being or staying motivated
- Withdrawal
- Avoidance
- Thoughts of violence or self harm
- Existential crises about your life, your family, your country, your job, your party, your coworkers, your boss, humanity, the fate of the world

Racism, Antisemitism, Misogyny & Homophobia Pose Even Greater Challenges For Many

- The mobs were almost exclusively white and predominantly male
- The challenge to election results had a strong racist component
- The racist motives of the mobs were evident in the confederate flags, the hateful signs and shouts, the clothing, the social media
- Black people and black imagery (e.g. John Lewis's portrait) were specifically targeted and vulnerable during the attack
- The long history of racism, antisemitism and gender violence in the country, and the inequitable treatment of this mob compared to BLM and other protestors cannot be denied and raises particularly difficult responses for people in certain groups versus others

What has happened is not right

- This is not how Americans are supposed to act
- This is not why you wanted to work here
- This is not what you want for your family
- This is not how things are supposed to be in any workplace
- This is not what you want your life to be filled with
- This is not how our nation is supposed to be



**How To Manage What You Are
Experiencing, Support Your Staff, Peers,
and Family So We All Come Through
This Stronger**

Purpose and Meaning

- Purpose and meaning may be the most powerful resources for you, your family and your staff
- There has to be a reason to go on
- We cannot allow the people who did this to prevail over us or over the country
- You are stronger than you know
- You are not alone
- Together we will get through this

We Have Examples of Courage and Purpose

“Despite everything that has happened, regardless of the pain of their loss, despite all the other nonviolent peaceful warriors who suffered and sometimes fell, I have never once considered giving up or giving out. I could not let myself get lost in a sea of despair, because I had faith that the truth is bigger than all humanity. ...The truth marches on; it is not connected to the life of any one individual. When a person dies, the dream does not die. You can kill a man, but the truth that he stood for will never die.”

—John Lewis, [Across That Bridge: Life Lessons and a Vision for Change](#)

The Importance of Your Work

- You are vital now and the work you do is even more important
- The world has changed and our normal ways of operating have to change
- You may be dealing with anger, threat and uncertainty
- You may be dealing with people who are irrational, paranoid, threatening
- But most people are not like that and many of the people you serve need your help

Support From and For Others

- It MUST be safe in the office and your home to have and express feelings – This must be state explicitly, modeled and practiced in reality
- People need permission to have space and time to experience and process
- Have a code word for needing emotional support, time, or space
- Reflective listening, validating, empathy
- You do not need to immediately solve things

Support From and For Others

- People need to feel they won't be judged
- People (including you) need to feel it's safe to reach out
- You need to be willing to be there and present with and for others
- Do not go this alone, do not leave others to solve this alone, find support in the office, groups online, on the phone, reach out

Self Care

- Being gentle with yourself and patient, you have been through a lot
- You and others may be grieving in a way, you have lost something precious and life has changed
- Recognize and accept and learn from your emotions, there are lessons here
- Reduce or stop a fixation on reviewing the negative images and bad news
- Make it a point to find beauty and goodness in yourself and in the world
- Have confidence in your strength, you may have been shaken but you are strong
- Practice mindfulness, breathe, do movement meditation – do it regularly (Try Thich Nhat Hanh – The Miracle of Mindfulness)
- Practice your spiritual traditions if they are helpful – pray if it helps
- Support yourself as you take care of yourself physically, get exercise, stretch,
- Watch out for alcohol or substance use
- Do not go this alone, reach out to friends and family

Professional Support

- Even the toughest soldiers, doctors, nurses, athletes etc. have benefited from therapy
- If you sliced your foot on some broken glass, you would get stitches, if your spirit has been wounded, it's fine to get help fixing that as well
- This is an act of strength, courage, resolve and a determination to move on, it is not a weakness in any way
- Support your peers or friends or staff if they seek help and therapy

Team Care

- If you are a leader, you set the example and the tone – and that example includes self care and care for the team
- Importance and challenges of supporting your team remotely
- This needs to be intentional and structured, it is a vital part of your responsibility and schedule
- Keys to helping remotely (6Rs)
- Ethics – Confidentiality, Respect, Safety
- Building and modeling a lasting culture of support
- Being a resource for others
- Seeking support and learning from your peers

The 6R Model of Communication

1. Readiness

- Quieting your mind
- Holding the habitual responses
- Meeting people where they are

2. Receiving

- Not just listening
- Taking in everything the person is saying and feeling

3. Relating

- This may be the most important thing you do to help
- Feeling what they feel and letting them know you do
- The power of listening, silence and reflecting

4. Reasoning

- Think before you speak

5. Responding

- Deciding what the best response is
- What does this person need most right now from you
- How you say things is as important as what you say

6. Repeating

- The cycle of Rs is ongoing

Security Measures

- The important thing is to be prepared but make preparation something you do to reduce the threat and your anxiety, not something that freaks you out.
- With families, sadly, children may need to be given some level of age appropriate instruction and practice so they know how to respond if you tell them.

“I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear.”

—Rosa Parks

Standard Procedures And Security

- Do this for all offices and staff and for your families and homes
- Clarify that the priority is safety, no one will be second guessed or punished if acting to secure their safety or that of others
- Things can be replaced, people can't
- Have procedures for dealing with threats on the phone
- Have procedures if someone in the office or home is threatening
- Practice regularly so EVERYONE knows what to do and how

Security & Preparedness

- In your home or office have alarms installed and set them
- Add layers of locks, e.g. jams in windows and doors
- Have specified procedures and equipment for securing the office or home from people outside trying to get in
- Have specified escape routes, consider how to get out of upper stories if necessary
- Have the necessary equipment installed or readily available and make sure everyone knows how to use it

Communication

- Establish specific code words and or symbols for communication of emergency and response
- Practice these within your team and with your family members
- Know by memory who to contact and how to reach them, have this in writing in your wallet or purse and on speed dial
- Make sure FAMILIES or significant others have specific and practiced communication plans
- Have designated safe places to go and agree where to meet
- Let your neighbors know (your office neighbors and your home neighbors) so they can support you and get help if needed

Behavioral Defenses

- Assess the threats - you may want to and be wise to fight individuals if you have to, especially active shooters - but you may want to be non-threatening versus groups or mobs if you are severely outnumbered
- Set up livestreaming for evidence and be sure it is being saved remotely, make mental notes of identifying information for later testimony
- Show in word and posture that you pose no threat “I can see you are angry, we are not a threat.”
- Negotiate, “What is it you want or need right now?”
- Lie if you need to

Non-lethal Defenses

- In your home and office have non-lethal defenses, e.g. bear spray, available for dealing with one or two assailants, DO NOT USE if you're heavily outnumbered. See previous
- Remember, your own weapons may be used against you or incite others to use something even worse
- Have a powerful source of bright light readily available
- Have whistles available to summon help and frighten attackers
- RUN AWAY!

Law Enforcement Relations

- If there are credible threats, notify and build a relationship with local police and sheriffs so they know who you are, what you and your family members look like and where you work and live
- This is especially important for persons of color
- Let LE know the source of threats and any identifying information you have
- Ask your local law enforcement to provide specific training and instruction to their force for responding to threats in your office or home
- Make sure 911 services are aware of you and your location

Activism

- Groups working to address the situation
- Making sure this does not happen again
- Insisting on a voice
- Being part of healing, especially if you feel you have in any way been affiliated with the wrong side of the events

Phone Answering Policies

- Change them to adapt to post-January 6 environment
- Communicate to callers and website visitors that it is a crime to threaten Members or staff
- Emphasize other ways to communicate that do not involve direct, live contact (website, social media, email)
- Provide staff “post-phone attack” relief
- Consider limiting real-time phone access to staff

U.S. Senate Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- **Goal & Mission:** Increase resiliency throughout the Senate community by helping to support happy, healthy and productive employees in DC and in State offices
- **Free & Confidential Services:**
 - Available to all Senators, staff and family members
 - Virtual appointments and with extended hours
 - Updated info on Webster on trauma and presentations for staff
- **Contact:** 202-224-3902, <http://webster.senate.gov/eap/>

U.S. House of Representatives Office of Employee Assistance

- Free & Confidential Consultation, Counseling and Information for the House community
- Management Consultation
- Executive Coaching
- Transition/Career Planning
- Training, Presentations and Retreat Facilitation
- Critical Incident Response: Organizational consultation and Management of crises impacting DC and District offices
- House Wellness Center

202-225-2400 · employee.assistance@mail.house.gov

Information available on HouseNet.house.gov under Personnel

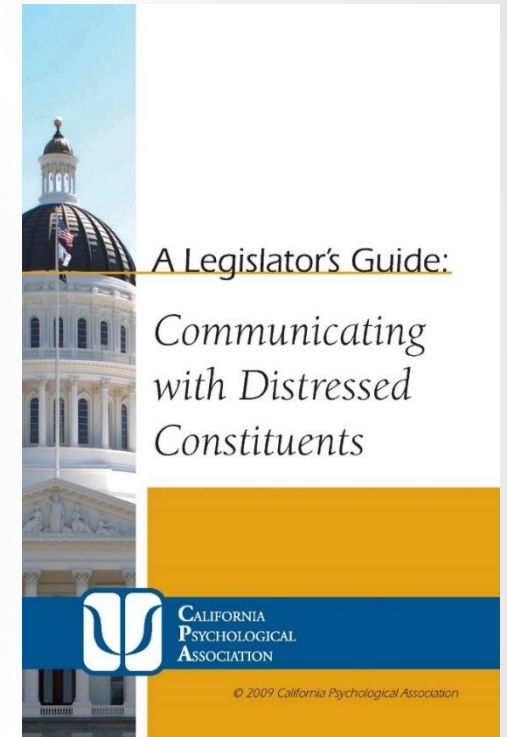
The Long Struggle For A Better World

“Ours is the struggle of a lifetime, or maybe even many lifetimes, and each one of us in every generation must do our part. And if we believe in the change we seek, then it is easy to commit to doing all we can, because the responsibility is ours alone to build a better society and a more peaceful world.”

—John Lewis, [Across That Bridge: A Vision for Change and the Future of America](#)

Additional Resources/Handouts

- CMF's [Congressional Crisis Preparation & Response Center](#):
 - Previous webinars: [“Managing Stress in Staff and Constituents During a Crisis”](#) & [“Strengthening Employee Well-Being and Personal Resilience”](#)
 - CPA Guide: [Communicating with Distressed Constituents](#)
 - [CMF Handout: Casework Burnout & Stress](#)
- House & Senate training and EAP/OEA offices offer variety of services & programs – check intranets for updated info



#CapitolStrong Resources

- [Staff Feedback Form](#) – Anonymous way to articulate how you feel
- ['Wall' of Support Notes](#) – Comments from friends to Capitol Hill
- [Immediate Crisis Resources Document](#) – Multiple resources for congressional staff
- CapitolStrong.org and @CapitolStrong and #CapitolStrong



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