



CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER

This guide is designed to help healthcare team members who are experiencing a normal reaction to a stressful event or outcome.

Overview

UI Health has developed the Care for the Caregiver program to help provide emotional support to providers and staff through the experience of patient care.

Through the Care for the Caregiver program, UI Health hopes to better coordinate support for providers and staff when they are involved in stressful patient care experiences. In addition to already existing resources such as the EAP and Spiritual Care Services, Care for the Caregiver has established a peer support team to provide one-on-one, emotional support for all care team members at UI Health. If you are experiencing a normal reaction to a stressful event or outcome, we can help.

Our goal is to help care team members understand what normal reactions to stressful events look and feel like, and the resources available to them. The program is available to all health care team members at UI Health hospitals and clinic sites.

Who would benefit from the C4C program?

A care team member who is distressed by involvement in an adverse or unexpected patient event, a medical error, or stressful patient care experience.

These types of experiences can leave the caregiver:

- Feeling personally responsible for the patient outcome
- Feeling as though they have failed the patient
- Second-guessing their clinical skills and knowledge base

Common reactions to stressful events

Physical symptoms:

- Sleep disturbance
- Difficulty concentrating
- Eating disturbance
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid heart rate
- Rapid breathing
- Muscle tension

Psychological symptoms:

- Isolation
- Frustration
- Fear
- Grief and remorse
- Uncomfortable returning to work
- Anger and irritability
- Depression
- Extreme sadness
- Self-doubt
- Flashbacks



Ways to cope with stress

- Remind yourself that it is OK that you are experiencing expected reactions to a stressful event
- Keep your life as routine as possible
- Physical exercise, along with relaxation, will help alleviate some physical reactions to stress
- Avoid alcohol and drug use
- Give yourself permission to react; don't try to hide your feelings
- Eat regularly and minimize the use of sugar and caffeine
- Do something nice for yourself

What is the role of the peer supporter?

The role of the supporter is to help a clinician cope by listening, offering perspective, emphasizing self-care and may help in providing additional resources and referrals to other support organizations.

The Care for the Caregiver program has been established to:

- Increase institutional awareness of support for UI Health caregivers experiencing difficult circumstances from the challenges inherent to the healthcare delivery system
- Provide consistent and targeted system-wide guidance and support for caregivers at UI Health
- Provide resources for leaders and managers to effectively support caregivers and refer them to additional support resources

What the peer supporters offer:

- Provide the caregiver with a safe space to express thoughts and reactions to enhance coping
- Ensure that information shared is strictly confidential
- Provide one-on-one support to explore the caregiver's feelings
- Provide the caregiver assurance that he or she is experiencing a normal reaction
- Refer the caregiver to other appropriate resources as needed

Resources

Care for the Caregiver Peer Support Program, C4C Email: c4c@uic.edu

