



the schwartz center  
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

**Stress First Aid**

**Case Examples**

# Check Example

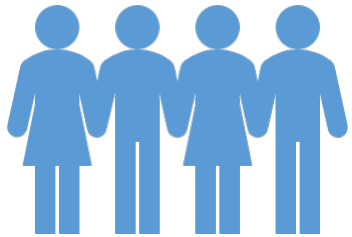
*“One of our staff had just returned to work after the death of her son. He had been killed in a car accident caused by driver who had been drinking.*

*After responding to a patient with serious injuries due to a driver who was reported to be intoxicated, I told her what a great job she had done and asked her if she wanted to take a quick break with me to grab a snack.”*

# Check Example

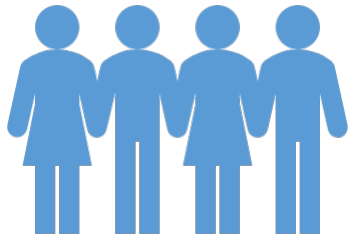
*“We cared for a pediatric patient for 9 months when she developed an infection and died within a few days. The next day, the nurse who had been caring for her called in sick with a bad cold. I gave her a call just to let her know that I was thinking of her. She said she was sure that her immune system had taken a hit due to the stress of the past several weeks and that she questioned why she continued to do this work. I listened and encouraged her to simply focus on taking care of herself. I reminded her how comforted the child’s family had been by the extraordinary care and compassion she had shown them and their daughter.”*

# Coordinate Example



*“One of our team members reported to work and was unusually quiet and distracted. During her break, I asked if everything was okay. She explained that her 2-year old child had just been diagnosed with autism and she just did not know where to begin to get the needed services. I told her that I knew someone on another shift who had a child with autism and she and her husband had become resource “experts” who had offered to help others. I offered to make an email introduction to her. At her next shift, she told me how helpful the referral had been.”*

# Coordinate Example



*“I noticed that a newly assigned nurse was much quieter than usual. I checked in with her and she confided in me that it had been her lifelong dream to work with burn survivors, and that she found the work rewarding, but wondered what I did to manage the stress. I invited her to yoga class and to eat with some of the other members of the staff, so she could see how we deal with and talk about our stress.”*

# Self-Care Cover Example



*“I recently had a realization that I have to set boundaries for myself to keep myself safe and healthy. At the end of the day work is important, certainly, but not so important that we can’t take care of ourselves.”*

# Co-Worker Support Cover Example



*“I had an old supervisor tell me our work is like sweeping sand. No matter how much you sweep, it’s going to be there. That helped me realize I can put my work down and go home, because I can come back tomorrow and start sweeping some more.”*

## Calm Example



*“After we had a couple of particularly tough shifts, I brought pistachio nuts in for the staff on duty. Shelling pistachios takes time and makes people slow down, so it gave us a chance to unwind and talk about what happened. Doing something supportive doesn’t have to look like a mental health intervention. In fact, the best interventions are often the least noticeable ones.”*

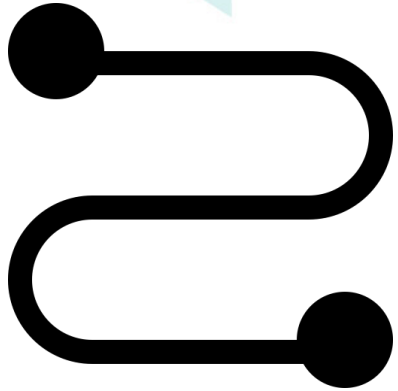


# Calm Example



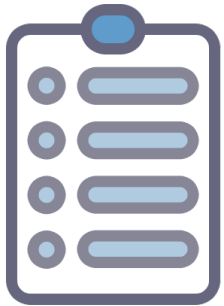
*“As a social worker on a burn unit, I often remind other professionals how important it is to have time just for themselves to recharge. It is so easy to become over-involved with this work and never allow yourself any down time. One of the things I find helpful is not to check work emails when I am at home.”*

## Connect Example



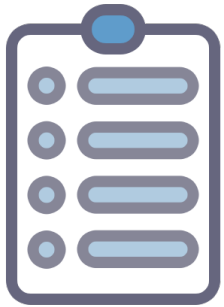
*“The people I reach out to are honest. It’s about calling a spade a spade, not dancing around it. They’re able to give their perspective on my problem and say something like: “You need to pick up the pieces and move on.” It serves to provide another’s perspective, and foster honesty. Or they might say, “That’s not normal for you.” I am skeptical of self-diagnosis. I think you need to get a second opinion from someone who knows you - a fresh perspective.”*

# Competence Example



*“Switching specialties was a struggle for me. I utilized all the resources I could and was not afraid to ask my supervisor or other coworkers for help and guidance. I was honest about my lack of confidence in my abilities, and I sought out (and continue to seek help) from other specialists.”*

# Competence Example



*“When a new staff member becomes a part of our burn unit team, we all work really hard to mentor and support that person. This work can be exhausting both physically and emotionally. There are so many difficult sights, smells and procedures. Some people try this work only to find that it is not for them. We make it possible for them to leave with support and hopefully without shame.”*

## Confidence Example



*“Sometimes you have to do some self-talk, because there’s only so much you can do and you’re not going to change someone trying to blame things on you, so you have to be comfortable in saying, “I know that I did everything that I could. No matter how somebody else sees it, I have to get to the point where I’m okay with others thinking that I didn’t do my job. I know I did my job.”*”

## Confidence Example



*“We have a lot of people who have never had something go wrong, and then once that happens, they’re having a hard time because they’re so worried about things that they weren’t worried about before. A lot of times you have to help people tone it down for themselves and say that they don’t have to be perfect. That’s where mentorship comes into play. Just because you have experience doesn’t mean that you come with all the tools that you need in this exact job.”*