Coping with a Stressful Work Event

For many people, their workplaces are a source of pride and fulfillment. When something unexpected brings negative publicity to your workplace, a wide variety of reactions can occur. It is normal under these circumstances to experience the following:

- **Fear.** You may fear additional negative events, focus on worst-case scenarios or feel unprepared to handle the additional stressors that you are facing.
- **Workplace tension.** The personal stress created during this type of situation often leads to difficult relationships with co-workers and/or supervisors. Some people become more agitated, while others withdraw. People expect emotions to follow rules of logic, but they do not.
- **Guilt.** You may feel personally responsible for any negative consequences that result from the problem. You may feel you could have, or should have, prevented what happened.
- **Worry.** This often stems from feeling powerless and vulnerable. Sometimes worry can be positive and motivate a person to take a positive action, but excessive, useless worry over things out of your control can become harmful.
- **Loss of control.** You may feel unsure about how the workplace will be affected by this event and how it will recover and move forward. You may wish you could do more to help those who are negatively impacted by the situation.

**How to cope:**

- **Concentrate on what you can control.** Work toward letting go of guilt and frustration over events that are outside of your influence.
- **Monitor yourself** for signs of excessive worry such as sleep disturbance, fatigue, impaired decision-making, forgetfulness and physical ailments.
- **Seek factual information** about the situation from management. Be cautious about relying on the media for information. Limit your exposure to distressing media coverage about the event.
- **Do something physical.** Get up and stretch, take a walk, move around.
- **Share your worries with supportive people.** Be careful to avoid people who will feed or downplay your worries.
- **Be prepared** to accept that the worst-case scenario may happen, but hope for the best. Avoid obsessing on negative possible outcomes.
- **Take some quiet time for yourself.** Connect to your source of spirituality. Practice deep breathing or other relaxation exercises.

**When to call for help:**

- Your feelings of frustration, fear or uncertainty just won’t go away.
- Your functioning at work, home or school is being affected by your emotional stress.
- Your personal relationships are strained by ongoing stress.
- You are relying on alcohol or other drugs to cope.

*LifeMatters has professional counselors available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.*

*Call anytime at 1-800-367-7474 or visit us online at mylifematters.com.*