



Caring for the Caregiver



This guide is designed to help health care team members experiencing a normal reaction to a stressful event or outcome.

Caring for the Caregiver

Overview

UCSF Health has developed the Caring for the Caregiver program to ensure that providers and staff are emotionally supported through the experience of patient care. Approximately 50% of clinicians are involved in an adverse event each year, which leads to decreased morale and lack of productivity—the “second victim” phenomenon.

Through the Caring for the Caregiver program, UCSF 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 FSAP and Spiritual Care Services, Caring for the Caregiver has established a peer support team to provide one-on-one, emotional first-aid for all care team members at UCSF Health. If you are experiencing a normal reaction to a stressful event or outcome (also called “second victim”), 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 UCSF Health hospitals and clinic sites.



Who is a second victim

A second victim is a care team member who is traumatized by involvement in an adverse or unexpected patient event, a medical error, or stressful patient care experience. Second victims often:

- Feel personally responsible for the patient outcome
- Feel as though they have failed the patient
- Second-guess 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



Who are peer supporters

Peer supporters are trained health care team members who provide one-on-one, confidential, emotional support to their peers and colleagues. They represent a variety of disciplines including nurses, physicians, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, social workers, chaplains, and AHPs. The support is targeted to alleviate the second victim experience.

The Caring for the Caregiver program has been established to:

- Increase institutional awareness of the second victim phenomenon
- Provide consistent and targeted system-wide guidance and support to the second victim
- Provide resources for leaders and managers to effectively support second victims and refer them to additional support resources

What the peer supporters offer:

- Provide the second victim 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 UCSF resources



Resources

Peer Support Program

Kiran Gupta, MD, MPH, Medical Director for Patient Safety

Email: caringforthecaregiver@ucsf.edu

Intranet page: caringforthecaregiver.ucsf.edu

Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP)

Email: fsap@ucsf.edu Phone: 415-476-8279

Department of Patient Safety Email:

PatientSafety@ucsf.edu

Spiritual Care Services

Susan Conrad, Manager

Email susan.conrad@ucsf.edu Phone: 415-353-1941

UCSF Health Risk Management

Email: riskmgmt@ucsf.edu Phone: 415-353-1842

24-Hour Pager: 415-443-2284

Employees only website: <https://rm.ucsfmedicalcenter.org/>

Student Health Services

Email: shs@ucsf.edu Phone: 415-476-1281

Wellness Resources

Website: livingwell@ucsf.edu