

## PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPAREDNESS FOR EMERGENCIES

How to make sure your teams are psyched

Emergency preparedness is multilayered and each layer is critical to success. Storing supplies and creating evacuation plans, sheltering plans and contingency plans are all for naught if staff and leaders lack the emotional reserve and fortitude to carry out those plans. When you and your staff are psychologically prepared, you will feel confident and competent. This capacity is often called resilience and is a capacity that can be developed and nourished.

Nurturing resilience - which we have called psychological preparedness - *before* the storm, will serve your home well in a time of crisis.

Psychological preparedness has three key ingredients:

1. A sense of team: *We are in this together*
  - Leaders reinforce this by showing you care (*the little things do matter*)
    - Walk around
    - Say hello
    - Learn the names of all your residents and staff
    - Say thank you
    - Catch them doing something good
  - Leaders reinforce this by rolling up their sleeves and working side by side with staff.
  - Leaders reinforce this by
    - Taking into account the needs of staff and their families when developing evacuation and sheltering plans:
      - Ask: what do *you* need to be on
        - the “go team”
        - the “return team”
        - the “get ready team”
      - You might
        - Offer to shelter families and pets
        - Encourage your staff to make their own evacuation and communication plans with their own families
        - Assist staff in identifying other resources

2. A sense of confidence: *We can do this*

You and your staff have realistic fears. You can help address those fears by letting staff know you have their backs and by taking steps to build confidence: in you, in themselves and in each other.

- Leaders earn confidence by
  - regularly providing accurate information about plans
  - communicating clearly and often
    - With each other
    - With managers
    - With direct care, ancillary staff
    - With residents
    - With resident' families
  - establishing clear roles
  
- Leaders build confidence by being credible. Credibility requires being
  - fair
  - consistent
  - reliable
  - trustworthy: do not make promises you cannot keep
  
- Staff develop confidence when
  - leaders notice and praise a job well done
  - routinely solicit and utilize their ideas

### 3. Emotional reserves: *We value your health*

Good health includes both physical and mental health.

Good health requires good health habits.

Good health habits and stress management skills boost brainpower and help prevent depletion of critical brain reserves during a crisis.

- Leaders support health by
  - modeling good self-care (*"your oxygen mask goes on first"*)
  - maintaining an attitude of optimism
  
- Leaders support health by
  - incorporating stress busters into the workplace
  - walk breaks
  - deep breathing
  - laughing
  - stretching
  
- Leaders support health by
  - providing nutritious food
  - ensuring adequate supplies to do the job
  - providing health benefits