

Leading Your Team after a Workforce Reduction



Leading Your Team through an Organizational and Emotional Change

Going through workforce reductions and staffing changes is emotional for you and your team. You must process what the change means to you and then support your team. Whether they are directly or indirectly impacted, your employees will look to you for accurate information and emotional support after the news is announced, and during the changes to come.

Processing the Change

Emotional reactions are a normal response to a change and can be prominent with workforce reduction—for those impacted and those who remain in their roles—as they grieve the loss. As a leader, you can be there to support them.

What May Surface

It's important that you recognize common reactions to a job loss, a role change or general uncertainty.

- **Shock.** Employees may need time to process the news. Initially, they may seem dazed or unable to focus. Be prepared to repeat information.
- **Sadness.** Give employees the opportunity to talk about their feelings. They may become tearful and need time to compose themselves. Offer them a private area to regroup for a few minutes. You can directly connect them with a clinician from the Sutter Employee Assistance Program by calling 1-800-477-2258.
- **Anger.** Anger is an understandable reaction. Avoid becoming defensive or trying to talk the employee out of their feelings. Remain calm. Offer to get a Sutter EAP clinician if the anger doesn't subside.
- **Questioning.** Validate the importance of questions. Recognize that some people may need to ask the same question many times because their own reactions may impede their ability to understand. Don't expect that you will have all the answers. Rely on Human Resources for help.
- **Threats to harm self or others.** This is not a typical reaction and rarely occurs. If an employee makes a threat, it should be taken seriously. Call 911 if needed and always contact Human Resources.

What You Can Do

Leaders create stability for their teams throughout a change. There are several actions you can take:

- **Be There.** Leaders need to be visible and involved during workforce reduction to interact with their teams; inspire confidence; and provide direction, encouragement, and hope.
- **Listen.** Really listen to your employees without judgment. After listening, you can remind employees about the need for a workforce reduction on an organizational level and empathize on the impact it has on the team.
- **Communicate.** It is not possible to over-communicate during this time. Communicate the facts as honestly as you can and with genuine compassion.
- **Take Care of Yourself.** It's important to model good self-care during this stressful time. Ask for support when you need it. Talk openly with your own leader and/or call Sutter EAP.

For more information, visit www.sutterhealth.org/eap
or call 1-800-477-2258 to learn more about your benefits.