



## Emotional First Aid (EFA) for Employees

### You Can Learn EFA Skills

In the same way we train to provide first aid for physical injuries or illness, we can learn Emotional First Aid (EFA). EFA is a collection of skills that help us take better care of ourselves and the people around us. When we develop good EFA skills, life feels better.

- If you cut yourself, you put a bandage on it.
- If your child is sick, you take them to the doctor.
- If a co-worker gets hurt, you assist or call for help.

But what happens when we hurt emotionally? What if the pain affects our personal lives, our ability to work, or the people around us?

People often ignore or even hide emotional pain. Sometimes it just goes away. But sometimes it gets worse and can lead to feelings of unmanageable stress, anger, depression, or even physical symptoms like headaches or back pain.



To learn more, call **800.834.3773** or visit **claremonteap.com**

### 5 Daily EFA Skills to Practice

Don't wait for a crisis. Start now by practicing the following skills in your daily life.

- 1. Notice emotional pain.** If you recently experienced a personal issue or traumatic event, and you just can't get past it, you need to pay attention to that psychological injury. Ignoring pain won't make it go away. You might be feeling angry, sad, or frustrated, but a psychological injury can also cause physical symptoms.
- 2. Be kind to yourself.** Negative self-talk like, "I'm so stupid," and "I do everything wrong," damages your self-esteem and resilience. Treat yourself with the same compassion you'd offer a friend or loved one. Next time you are feeling negative, take a few seconds to say or think something nice about yourself.
- 3. Avoid rumination.** Repeatedly replaying distressing events in your mind is not helpful. To disrupt rumination, distract yourself by doing positive activities that require mental or physical attention. If you catch yourself ruminating, label it as worrying, and move on.
- 4. Redefine failure.** Avoid focusing on what you can't do instead of what you can. Instead, try making a list of what you'd control or change if you were to try again. Tell yourself that next time, you'll do better, forgive yourself and go on.
- 5. Find meaning in loss.** Consider what you've gained or could change from the experience to add purpose to your life. Try supporting others who have experienced a similar loss to lessen your own pain.

# EFA Skills for Employees



## Personal EFA Skills

A psychological injury can hurt just as much as a physical one. Sometimes the pain lasts even longer. With Emotional First Aid (EFA) skills, you gain a better outlook on life and recover from challenges faster.



## Workplace EFA Skills

People get hurt at work every day. While we spend time training to respond to physical injuries, many of us just don't know how to react when someone near us is hurting emotionally and needs help.

Severe emotional events affect almost everyone. But sometimes, less severe experiences can also damage people.

Being yelled at by a supervisor. Being blamed for something. Fighting with a co-worker. Feeling misunderstood. Facing unexpected changes.

These situations can hurt. Some of us recover on our own, but without emotional first aid (EFA), the pain can grow into lingering wounds.

We all respond to personal experiences in different ways at different times. One person might be feeling more sensitive than usual because of problems at home. Another may simply lack personal resilience skills.

What might seem like a small incident to you, could feel like the world is crashing down to someone else.

Without EFA skills, people often ruminate, replay incidents in their heads, or talk about them with co-workers or family members.

Rumination doesn't resolve pain, so people get stuck and develop psychological wounds. Rumination can lead to personal problems, including depression or substance abuse. Being around people who spend time ruminating can also damage you.

You can use your EFA skills to help others avoid psychological wounds while you help protect yourself from any negativity at work.



## Crisis EFA Skills

Traumatic events can happen anywhere, including at work. They might include an accident, an act of violence, or a natural disaster. If something like this happens at your workplace, take care of yourself. Once you know you're okay, you can try to help others who might be suffering from emotional shock.

### 5 Tips for Helping Someone Who Has Just Been Traumatized

- 1 Help with any bodily injuries, medical issues, or physical needs first.
- 2 Go to a safe place if possible.
- 3 Stay with them. Don't get up and act like nothing happened. Help them stay dry, warm, and still. Trembling or being emotional is part of healing, and better than 'numbing out.'
- 4 If the person wants to talk, listen without interrupting or changing the subject.
- 5 Encourage them to reconnect with their body and feel the sensations in their body fully.

Trauma can cause us to cut off from our bodies. When we are in overwhelming danger, we can dissociate or leave our bodies. This can be helpful to us during a traumatic event, but we need to reconnect after, so we don't get stuck in trauma.

Ask the individual to tell you about a favorite place, where they feel safe or happy. Have them describe how they feel when they are in that place, including the smells, sounds, and colors.

Source: [goodtherapy.org](http://goodtherapy.org)

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## 10 EFA Tips to Help Yourself

- 1 Take five slow, deep breaths.
- 2 Remind yourself that this, too, shall pass.
- 3 Accept all of your feelings.
- 4 Have faith in you. You can handle more than you might believe at this moment. If so inclined, use meditation or prayer for added support.
- 5 Don't take anything personally.
- 6 Try to stick with your routine, even if you feel dazed or numb. It will help anchor you.
- 7 Eat, sleep, or get some fresh air.
- 8 Picture your 6-year-old self, and lovingly embrace that child. Gently reassure the frightened self inside you.
- 9 Understand you are here, in this life, for everything, good and bad. Visualize yourself as a river of experiences, and let life flow without judgment.
- 10 Connect with someone. Talk to a friend, family member, or EAP counselor. Helping a co-worker might also help you feel better.

Source: [https://www.ncmhr.org/downloads/trauma\\_first\\_aid\\_fact\\_sheet12-08.pdf](https://www.ncmhr.org/downloads/trauma_first_aid_fact_sheet12-08.pdf)

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## 8 EFA Tips for Helping Others

- 1 Be a positive listener. When someone is stuck in a rumination loop, they might just need a good listener to help them move on. Listen without judging, but try to pick up on cues of how they were hurt.
- 2 Encourage positive self-talk. Repeat key moments of their story, so they know you're listening, but leave out any negative self-talk they included.
- 3 Remind them to be kind. Ask how they'd feel if you were in their situation. Remind them to treat themselves the way they'd treat you or other co-workers or friends.
- 4 Help them reframe the situation. Ask what they would do differently next time. This can help them move past the incident by planning for the future.
- 5 Encourage resolution. If possible, suggest they talk about it with the other people involved. Most people don't want to hurt others, and they will likely modify their behaviors in the future.
- 6 Help them find closure. Recommend they write about what happened and then write how it could have gone better. Writing can help bring closure and break the overthinking cycle.
- 7 Share mindfulness strategies you use. Go for a walk with them or suggest other mindful activities: breathing exercises, yoga, etc.
- 8 Recommend counseling. Counseling provided by Claremont EAP can help people recover from psychological wounds fast. It's free and confidential.