

## Offering Support to Others During Difficult Times

There are many ways to help others who are dealing with budget cuts and organizational changes.

- ' Acknowledge the **importance** of change to the other person.
- ' Remember that each person has a **unique response to change**. Many will have physical, emotional, or cognitive responses. Fatigue and pre-occupation are examples of normal responses to major changes.
- ' Many people have **a need to talk** about their feelings and the meaning of the change to them. Encourage the person to talk openly. Listen attentively.
- ' **Accept feelings** as expressed. Acceptance does not mean agreement, but it does demonstrate a willingness to acknowledge the feelings as real and important to the other person.
- ' Be careful not to offer **premature reassurances**. Although things may get better, there is no guarantee.
- ' **Avoid cliches**. Pat answers can be interpreted as minimizing the other person's experience.
- ' **Be available**. Even though you might not know exactly what to say, just being there can often be enough.
- ' Offer **practical day to day assistance**, as you are able. Sometimes it helps to assist with the small things, such as a cup of coffee, or picking up a snack.
- ' Be prepared for the other person to make some **behavioral or attitudinal changes** due to the event(s). The person may adapt through responses which you experience as unfamiliar.
- ' Talk with the other person about involvement in physical, intellectual, or spiritual **activities that have deep personal meaning**.
- ' **Be alert** for serious problems. Talk about what you are observing and let them know you care.
- ' **Serious problems** might include depression, inability to express feelings, expressions of isolation, feeling disconnected from significant others, expressions of hopelessness, heavy alcohol or drug use.
- ' Be prepared to help the other person get **professional assistance**, as appropriate. In the work place, LIFELINE is an available resource. **1-800-284-7575**.

