



HOT

WALK

AND

TALK

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A strategy to safely and kindly guide someone through a negative stress reaction following a traumatic incident.

HOT: Ensure that the person is physically out of danger. Instruct the person to walk with you and move away from the area where the incident occurred and toward a neutral or safe area. If possible, go outside.

WALK: Walk beside them at a pace that is brisk enough to help them discharge some of the distress. As the walk proceeds, they may naturally slow the pace – let them have more control over the pace as the debriefing progresses.

AND: Bring a bottle of water and have them drink it as you walk.

TALK: Let them know that they are safe, that their reaction to stress is normal, and that you are there to

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support them. Ask them to tell you what happened. If they get stuck on a particular moment, prompt them to move on with a guiding statement such as: “and then what happened?” The goal is to help them move through the whole narrative from beginning to end – until they get to the present where they are walking in safety and are no longer at risk.

After the initial debrief, ask the person what they would find helpful now? Do they want to phone a family member, get a sandwich, take a break, go back to work? They need to have control over their choices while attending to their needs.

Let the individual know that you will remain available to them and encourage them to access additional supports that may be available if they would find them helpful (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs, counselling, other community resources).

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