

## Aid Worker Pocket Card

Dear Colleague,

Nothing ever quite prepares us for the amazing difficulties and joys that we find when responding to disasters and crises. Yet, over the past 15 years, we have learned a great deal about the psychosocial needs of communities in crisis and how we, as workers, can best help take care of ourselves while we try to help others.

At the request of several different groups, we have created a brief pocket card that you can carry with you to remind you of how important it is to take care of yourself and those working with you. The strategies suggested are based on the experiences of other people working in crisis settings and on research from around the world.

Please feel free to print as many copies as you like, and to share this card with others.

If you would like more information about caring for yourself in difficult work, please visit our website at <http://telida.isu.edu> or the *Actions Without Borders* Psychosocial.org website that provides information for pre-deployment, in the field, and re-entry.

We recognize the enormity of your task and your commitment and the smallness of this card but we hope that it will provide you with a daily reminder of the lessons learned by your predecessors and our compassion for you as you work to help other rebuild their lives.

Dr. Beth Hudnall Stamm, Ph.D., Idaho State University irh@isu.edu  
Craig Higson-Smith, M.A., South African Institute of Traumatic Stress  
Amy C. Hudnall, M.A., Appalachian State University  
Dr. Henry E. Stamm, Ph.D., Pocatello, ID, U.S.A.  
The Faculty and Staff of the Institute of Rural Health at Idaho State University

## CARING FOR YOURSELF IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULT WORK

Our work can be overwhelming. Our challenge is to maintain our resilience so that we can keep doing the work with care, energy, and compassion.

### 10 things to do each day

1. Get enough sleep
2. Get enough to eat
3. Vary the work that you do
4. Do some light exercise
5. Do something pleasurable
6. Focus on what you did well
7. Learn from your mistakes
8. Share a private joke
9. Pray, meditate or relax
10. Support a colleague

### For More Information

See your supervisor or visit [www.psychosocial.org](http://www.psychosocial.org) or [telida.isu.edu](http://telida.isu.edu)

This card is a service of the Idaho State University Institute of Rural Health, funded in part by Telehealth Idaho grant #5-D1BTM00042 US DHHS, HRSA Office for the Advancement of Telehealth. The contents herein do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. DHHS, and you should not infer endorsement by the Federal government

## SWITCHING ON AND OFF

Your empathy for others helps you do your job. It is important to take good care of your feelings by monitoring how you use them. The most resilient workers are those that know how to turn their feelings off when they go on duty, but on again when they go off duty. This is not denial, it is coping strategy. It is a way they get maximum protection while working (feelings switched off) and maximum support while resting (feelings switched on).

### How to become better at switching on and off

1. Make this a conscious process. Talk to yourself as you switch.
2. Use images that make you feel safe and protected (switch off) or connected and cared for (switch on) to help you switch.
3. Develop rituals that help you switch as you start and stop work.
4. Breathe slowly and deeply to calm yourself when starting a tough job.