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Self-care tip sheet for family partners

Being involved in partnerships has been described by some partners as *'an amazing sense of knowing that what you have been through will contribute to helping others facing similar circumstances'*.

Like everyone working in this area, it is important that you look after your own wellbeing too.

As well as positive and rewarding feelings during your work, you may have strong and sometimes overwhelming responses that could impact on your thoughts, behaviour, emotions or physical wellbeing.

These responses may be quite common and understandable given your past experiences, which may include trauma.

What can I do if any of these responses occur during my involvement?

- Remember what you have done in the past to take care of yourself in similar situations and do that!
- Recognise that you have been reminded about a distressing experience and that your reactions are completely understandable.
- Feel free to walk out of your meeting or stop your work if needed and find a safe and comfortable space to relax.
- Feel free to return to your work when comfortable and/or return to your meeting if you feel up to it. Remember, there will be no judgement from our staff.
- Seek support from our staff during the meeting if you need it. If this is not possible, seek support from staff after your meeting.
- Consider seeking peer support from other people with lived experience.
- For some people, it may also be useful to seek spiritual support or guidance.
- People from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds may find support in family and kinship networks. Social and emotional wellbeing is maintained through connections to body, mind and emotions, spirituality, Land, Community, families and culture.
- Is there a place or 'Country' that helps you connect?
- Are there rituals or practices that help maintain your spirit?
- Try to stick to your usual routine as much as possible, but consider scheduling in a little less activity if you can.
- Accept your feelings and express them in a safe way that feels right to you. Others have found that things like writing in a journal and talking to or just

being with friends, family or health professionals that you trust can be helpful. Remember, support comes in many forms.

- Spend some time doing activities you enjoy. These may include spending time in nature or gardening, listening to music, making art, doing breathing exercises, gently stretching, exercising, or just resting.
- You may find comfort in routine activities such as making the bed, washing the dishes, and doing the laundry.
- Consider asking family and friends for support - including time to talk, time out, or time to just be with someone.
- It is usually best to avoid overusing alcohol, drugs, cigarettes or food to cope.
- Make a plan for what to do if your reactions become overwhelming.
- Remember that it is okay to ask for help if you feel you need it.

What support is available through our organisation?

We are committed to your wellbeing and have people here to support you: **<enter name/s here and phone number/s here>**. They are available before, during and after your involvement and can provide confidential support. If they are unavailable, then you are welcome to call their manager, **<enter name here and phone number here>**.

What are my other support options?

Some people seek support from family, friends or peers, whilst others prefer to get help from professionals such as GPs, psychologists, social workers or psychiatrists. It is important that whatever support you choose, you feel safe and comfortable in discussing your thoughts and feelings.

For immediate free assistance, call Lifeline on 13 11 14 for confidential 24-hour counselling and referrals.

This document has been adapted from Emerging Minds' co-designed tip sheet. Special thanks to Tanya Ward for her considerable input.

