

Mental Health and Wellness Supports for Staff

The Antelope Valley Union High School District recognizes and appreciates the hard work of our committed teachers and staff members. We believe it is vital to our success as an organization that ALL staff take some time each day to care for themselves. Self-care is necessary for your own mental health and your ability to give our students the very best you have to offer. Below are practical tips to ensure you are taking care of yourself.

Process your thoughts. During and after experiencing trauma, it is common to go into survival mode and not have energy to wrap your head around what happened. It may feel safest to bury painful feelings and avoid confronting them, but acknowledging what happened and how it has impacted you is an important part of healing. When you feel ready, take time to think about how you have been affected and be proud of yourself for pushing through.

Connect with people. The pain of trauma can lead some people to isolate themselves, but having a support system is a crucial part of well-being. Emotional support helps us feel less alone and overwhelmed by traumatic experiences in our lives. Talking to someone who has gone through a similar experience or someone who cares about you can be validating and help you feel better equipped to overcome the challenges you are facing.

Do not compare your experience to others. We often question our own thoughts or experiences, and you may convince yourself that what you experienced was not a big deal because “others have it worse.” Everyone experiences trauma differently, and no one trauma is “worse” than another. If it hurt you, then it hurt you – and your feelings and experiences are valid.

Take care of your body. Stress and trauma impact your body and physical health just as much as your mind. Listening to your body and giving it what it needs will help you heal. This includes eating a nutritious diet, getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, and exercising regularly. Moving your body is especially helpful to trauma healing; aim to do it every day, even if it is only a few minutes of stretching.

Know it will take time. There is no set timeline for how you “should” heal. Remove the pressure of needing to bounce back quickly and focus on taking it one step at a time. Remember: recovery isn’t linear, and it is normal to have bad days and setbacks. It does not mean you are failing. It is just part of the process.

Give yourself grace. Dealing with trauma and stress is no easy feat, but it is still common to get frustrated with yourself and what can sometimes be a slow recovery process. Try to catch when you hold yourself to unreasonable standards. Instead of angrily asking yourself, “why am I acting like this?”, think about how impressive it is that you keep going, despite what you have faced.

Do not feel ashamed to ask for help. It is easy to compare how you are feeling to how you assume others, who have been through similar experiences, are feeling. You may get down on yourself because it seems like everyone else is doing just fine. What others experience and how they cope does not matter in your journey. If you feel like you need (or want) help, it is important to get that as soon as you can.

Source: Mental Health America 2020