

# **Bouncing Back: Supporting Employees Through Crisis**



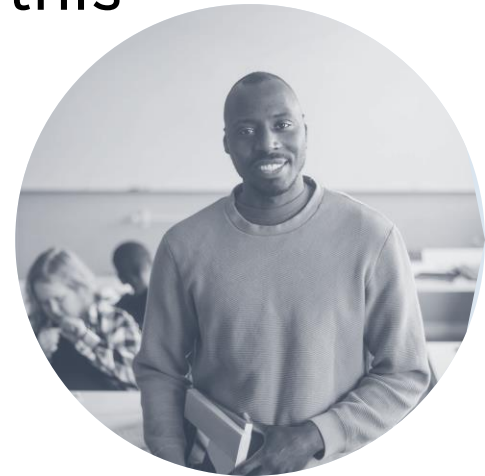
**Dr. Cecile Dennis**



# Our Leadership Reality

- Every organization will face at least one challenge/crisis at some point in the future
- To cope, organizations must establish a crisis management plan (**do you have one?**)
- The Business Continuity Institute (BCI) Crisis Management Report 2024: 75% participants activated their crisis management plans over the past year
- 87% identified **staff well-being** as a critical component of this plan

PriceWaterhouseCooper (PwC) identified through its 2021 Global Crisis survey, that **over 95% of participants** said their crisis management plans needed improvement.



# Our Organizational Reality

- While employees should be a critical part of an organization's crisis management plan, data shows that **only 49%** of companies surveyed **have a strategic crisis management plan in place** (Capterra, 2023).



# Our Organizational Reality

- How the organization handles the disaster **before, during or after** the crisis is critical not only to the **health of its employees** but also to the **organization's sustainability**.



# Bouncing Back Starts With Communicating With Our People

- Jamaican Labour Law:


## PART V—*Communication and Consultation*

### 19. *Communication and Consultation*

Communication and consultation are necessary ingredients in a good industrial relations policy as these promote a climate of mutual understanding and trust which alternately result in increased efficiency and greater job satisfaction. Management and workers or their representatives should therefore co-operate in promoting communication and consultation within the organization.

#### (a) *Communication*

Communication is a two way flow of information between management and workers or their representatives. There should likewise be scope for a cross flow of information between various departments of management—

- (i) management should following consultation with workers or their representatives take appropriate measures to apply an effective policy of communication;
- (ii) such measures as are adopted should in no way prejudice the position of recognized workers representatives or management and supervisory representatives;
- (iii) a communication policy should be adapted to the nature of the undertaking, its size and composition and the interest of the workers;
- (iv)  the most important medium of communication is by word of mouth through personal contact between management and workers or workers' representatives. However, personal contact should be supplemented where necessary by such means as—
  - (a) written information by way of house-journals, bulletins, notice-boards;



# Bouncing Back: Prioritizing KYP over KYC



Employee Data

Organizations place greater focus on knowing its customers (KYC – regulatory) rather than **knowing its people (KYP)**

Updating\* our people information – critical (COVID19 Lesson)

Knowing **mission-critical** personnel is paramount

Know their **whereabouts** \*\* – health and other implications (COVID-19)

We must find them quickly for business continuity

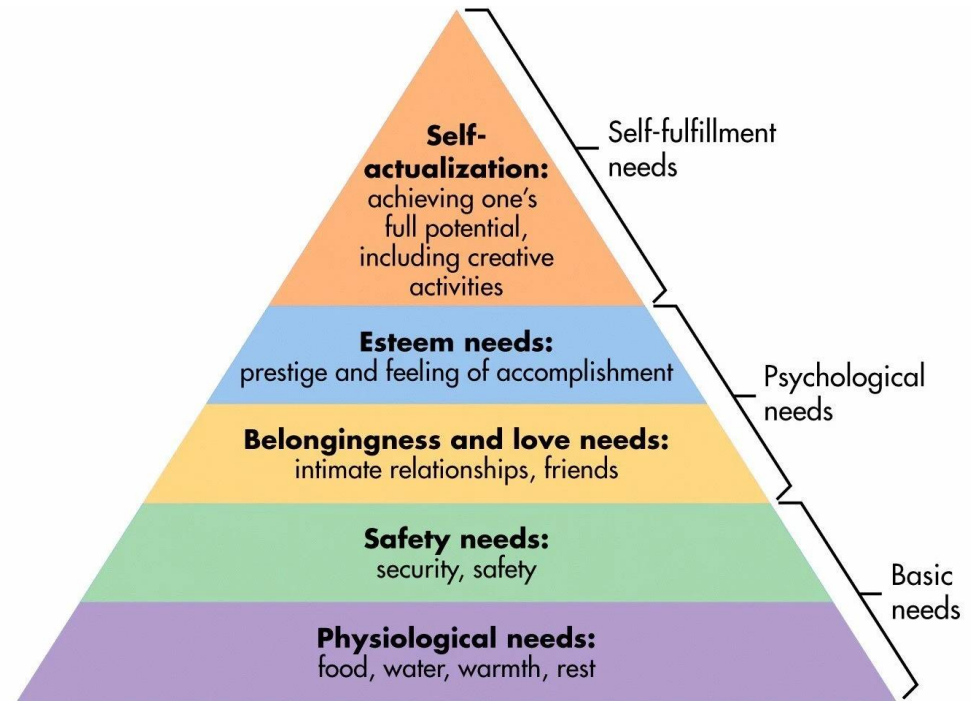
- Ensure they are safe
- Understand their crises

# What do Employees Look For?

- **Initial communication from the organization**
  - Is the building still standing?
  - Do I still have a job?
- **Knowing the company's position: Open to business or not?**
- **Signs of care**
  - Communication that you care about my well-being
- **Signs that you understand my crisis**
  - **Instructions to return?** OR Questions of the possibility to return?
- Physical, emotional-**psychosocial**, and often, **financial** support

# Understanding & Fulfilling Employee Needs

Organizations must address their employees' **psychosocial**, mental health, financial and personal needs before, during and after a crisis.





# The Psychosocial Impact of Trauma

Psychosocial needs refer to the **emotional, social, and psychological requirements** essential for a fulfilling life, including love, belonging, self-esteem, **(job) security** and **safety**.

- **essential for fostering healthy relationships and enhancing overall life satisfaction.**

The mental health and well-being of employees: An increasing concern in post COVID-19 period (Wu et al., 2021).

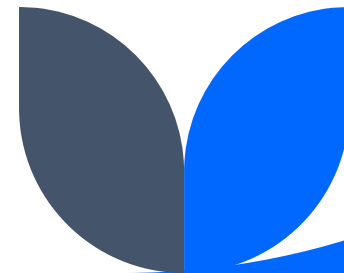
# Employee Psychosocial Needs

**Emotional Support:** Having friends or family members **who listen and provide comfort** during **challenging times**.

**Social Interaction:** Regular engagement with others fostering a sense of belonging and community.

**Self-Esteem:** Positive reinforcement from peers boosts confidence in abilities and worth.

**Safety and Security:** A stable environment ensuring they feel protected from physical harm or **emotional distress**.

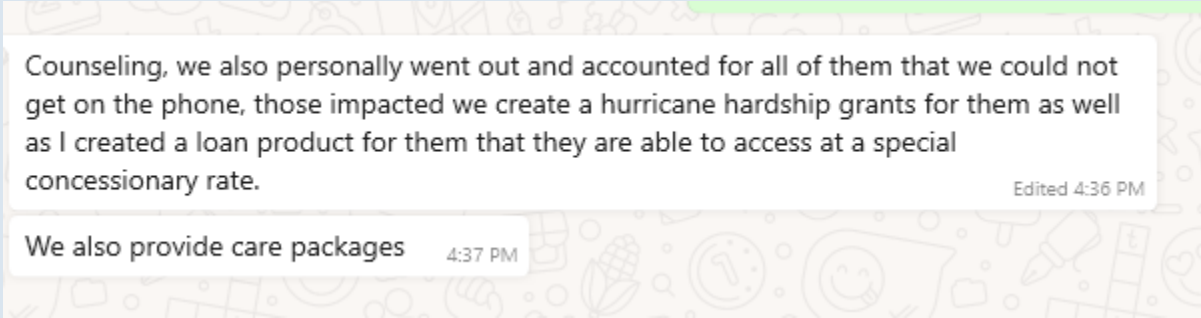


# How Can We Fulfil Employees' Needs

1. Ensure people needs represented in budgeting & strategic planning
2. Budget for employee crisis support during planning stage
3. Update employee information regularly
4. Create departmental/team communication groups
5. Establish Employee Buddy system
6. Demonstrate CARE
  - Early contact; CARE Packages; financial support; physical support; counselling sessions

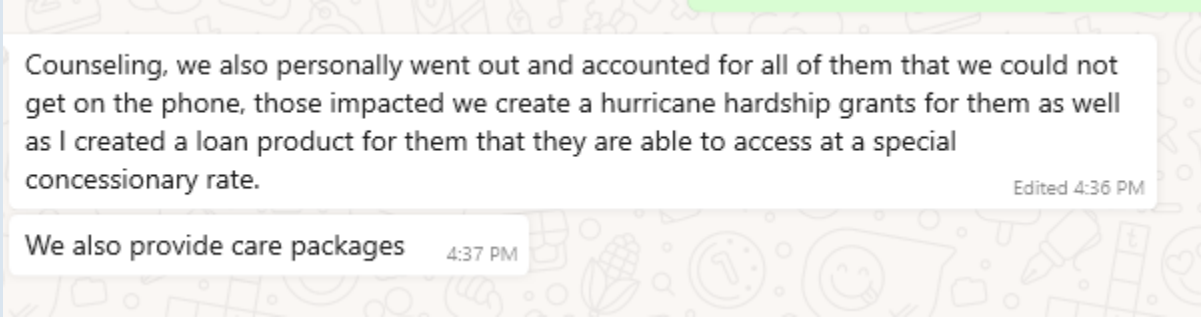


# Demonstrated Examples of CARE

- Virtual counselling session post- Melissa;
  - Participants shared thoughts, needs and offered assistance to each other
- Reaching out to employees:

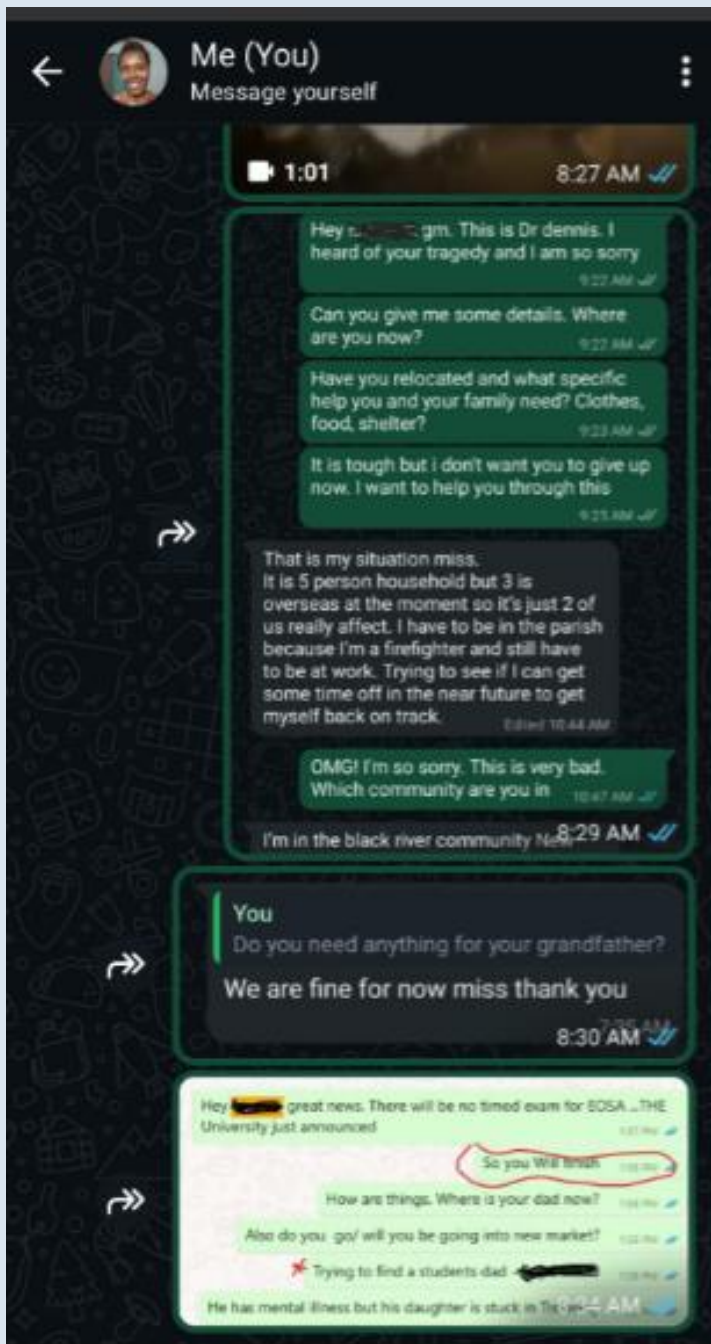
The screenshot shows a WhatsApp chat interface with a patterned background. It contains two messages. The first message, which has been edited, reads: 'Counseling, we also personally went out and accounted for all of them that we could not get on the phone, those impacted we create a hurricane hardship grants for them as well as I created a loan product for them that they are able to access at a special concessionary rate.' The second message reads: 'We also provide care packages'. Both messages include timestamps.
- Providing physical support (Montego Bay & Negril): identified and assessed each case; provided alternative accommodation to displaced employees with CARE packages
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# Demonstrated Examples of CARE

- Virtual counselling session post- Melissa;
  - Participants shared thoughts, needs and offered assistance to each other
- Reaching out to employees:A screenshot of a WhatsApp chat conversation. The background is a light yellow with faint icons. There are two messages. The first message is in a white bubble and says: "Counseling, we also personally went out and accounted for all of them that we could not get on the phone, those impacted we create a hurricane hardship grants for them as well as I created a loan product for them that they are able to access at a special concessionary rate." It is followed by "Edited 4:36 PM". The second message is in a white bubble and says: "We also provide care packages" followed by "4:37 PM".

Counseling, we also personally went out and accounted for all of them that we could not get on the phone, those impacted we create a hurricane hardship grants for them as well as I created a loan product for them that they are able to access at a special concessionary rate. Edited 4:36 PM

We also provide care packages 4:37 PM
- Providing physical support (Montego Bay & Negril): identified and assessed each case; provided alternative accommodation to displaced employees with CARE packages
- UCC – No timed exams for students; opened campus for internet connection; relief for late fees



## Demonstrating CARE in Conversation



# References

Wu, A., Roemer, E. C., Kent, K. B., Ballard, D. W., & Goetzel. R. Z. (2021). Organizational best practices supporting mental health in the workplace. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 63(12). <https://doi.10.1097/JOM.0000000000002407>.

F24. (2025). BCI emergency & crisis communications report 2025. <https://f24.com/en/bci-ecc-2025/>



# Thank You

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