





Clinical Guidelines for COVID-19 Response

The **5 C's of COVID-19** are trauma-informed guidelines for supporting first responders.

Connection	
 <p>Goal: Increase safety and stability.</p>	<p style="background-color: #d9e1e2; padding: 5px;">Do (Be your authentic self -- see script)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell them about yourself. Set the structure. Be patient. Mirror their pace and adjust your pace to meet theirs. Let them know that this is their time. <p style="background-color: #d9e1e2; padding: 5px;">Don't (Provide therapy as usual)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid being a blank slate and interpreting. Avoid rushing through or talking too slowly. Avoid focusing the time on your experiences or qualifications.
Context	
 <p>Goal: Reduce stress.</p>	<p style="background-color: #d9ead3; padding: 5px;">Do (Name, affirm, and normalize)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge the tension between their work and their family/safety. Affirm all feelings are valid and protective. Confirm we are fighting this disease that leaves us all anxious. <p style="background-color: #d9ead3; padding: 5px;">Don't (Pathologize or diagnose)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid promising solutions. Avoid lecturing or giving too much information.
Coherence	
 <p>Goal: Promote connectedness.</p>	<p style="background-color: #fff2cc; padding: 5px;">Do (Help them move from chaos to central story)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be humble and deeply listen. Help them move from chaos toward a coherent story. Validate the challenge we are all facing, the unique ones they face. <p style="background-color: #fff2cc; padding: 5px;">Don't (Change or correct their story)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid interpreting or defining their experience.
Collaboration	
 <p>Goal: Co-create inclusive resources.</p>	<p style="background-color: #d9ead3; padding: 5px;">Do (Create alliance and action)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask permission to partner in figuring what to do next. Ask what has helped them through in the past. Ask about humorous or touching stories of survival they admire. Reinforce existing coping resources and offer ones that meet needs. <p style="background-color: #d9ead3; padding: 5px;">Don't (Instruct or force solutions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid forcing coping skills and self-care strategies.
Consolidation	
 <p>Goal: Instill authentic hope.</p>	<p style="background-color: #d9d2e9; padding: 5px;">Do (Formally close the session - see script)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cue when end is near and briefly review what was covered. Close with appreciation, gratitude, and grounding exercise. <p style="background-color: #d9d2e9; padding: 5px;">Don't (Leave someone in chaos or without a safety plan for risks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid ending abruptly, exceeding stated ending time, not addressing risks. Avoid ending session without asking if they would like follow-up.

5 C's of Clinical Care: Sample Script/Talking Points

Consider below as guidance, not intended for verbatim use to replace authentic connection.

Connection

Begin with Stated Structure:

"Hello, I am (your name here). Thank you for connecting. I'd like to start with how much gratitude I have for what you are doing. You are saving lives and keeping us all safe. Our wellness matters too. Today we have (specify time – 40/50/60 minutes to talk). I have a bit of a structure that we'll use, and we can also figure out together which supports are most useful for you. This conversation is confidential. I will not let your boss, coworkers or anyone else know the content. The only exception is if there are details that are reportable like child abuse, elder abuse or risk to yourself or others."

Extend Hope: Our Goal

"I am sure it took a lot to even decide to meet today. In most cases it is extremely helpful to have a space to reflect and connect. It can actually reduce the impacts of stress and improve the way you feel and function. The goal today is to connect and provide support."

Introduce Yourself:

"Let me tell you a little bit about myself. I am a clinician and have worked locally for (include tenure) years. I have experience in how disasters and trauma impact all of us including frontline responders. I'm a white man (share your race and sex and/or gender identity) and grandpa (share one personal identity or role). Before we get started, do you have any questions about anything I've said and/or our time together today? I'd like to also invite you to introduce yourself to me in any way you feel comfortable".

(We want to make sure we create a strong connection. Identifying who they are and who you are is an important context in this conversation. You may wish to give a little more information about the structure of the session ahead of time or there will likely be a lot of questions about it here.)

Context

Acknowledge Uncertainty, Clarify Conflict:

"We are living in a time of great conflict between two parts of our identities. For many frontline responders, honoring the oath to protect the community as a disaster/healthcare responder may create a conflict or additional stress about how we can keep ourselves and our families healthy. We are faced with something many of us have never had to deal with before and might mean we're also making some of this up as go."

Validate and Explain Goal:

"Whatever feelings and thoughts that are coming up for you are understandable and protective responses to an extraordinarily unusual situation. We're all doing the best we can. Hopefully this conversation will provide reassurance, validation and support." (Use your own words and even better if you can validate using what they have already shared with you)

Coherence

Strategies for Creating a Narrative: PRIDE

While the Story is being told you can:

- **Pace:** (Slow down): "There is so much going on. Do you mind if I make sure I am understanding all of it?"
- **Reframe (Clarify):** "So what you are saying is..... Is that what you meant? Or Let me see if I understand. You said (repeat exact word). Is that right?"
- **Identify Central Themes:** "This is complex. Would it be ok if I check if I have the two or three themes of what you are saying correct?"
- **Digest & Summarize:** "I want to sum up what I heard you say and see what I have missed or gotten wrong."
- **Endorse:** (Validate what has been said) "This makes perfect sense to me."

Collaboration

Partnership

"We have about 10 minutes left and I want to make sure we have a chance to think together about addressing what you brought up. Specifically, let's think about what you can do that is within your control and identify those things that are not in your control but perhaps you can influence." (Repeat Themes-Identify/name any acute risks identified to part of discussion).

Doing with, not for

What has worked, even in the past, with this type of challenge? "If the person you're speaking with is struggling to identify solutions, you could potentially suggest 2 or 3 resources or ideas that may be helpful. (Use open-ended questions instead of directive statements).

Consolidation

Provide Predictability for End of Session/Address any risks identified.

(Closure is critical. Make sure you cue them when 5- 10 minutes is left and begin consolidation.)

"We have about 10 min left and in a minute I'd like to sum up our call and next steps. Would that be okay?" (Makes sure to create plan for any risks identified: suicide, household violence. See Risk info.)

Reinforce Coherent Themes:

"There is a lot we have covered today. Here is where I think we are ..." (sum up themes and strategies). "Here are some strengths that I have heard from you.." (Reinforce coping and connectedness here).

Grounding Meditation to Close:

"I'd like to invite us both to take a minute, if you are willing, to take some grounding breaths together. Take some time to drop in a bit. You can keep your eyes open or closed. One thing that helps me remember one thing I'm grateful for, or even a person on whose shoulders I'm standing or whose guidance is supporting me. It can be anyone near or far. Can we take a moment to give thanks to this person or the whatever helps you through this difficult time? (Quiet 20 seconds).

Gratitude:

Thank them for time and for their gifts they are bringing to all around them.

Next Steps:

"Would you like to have another check-in? When would work best for you?"