

## SCREEN FOR DIABETES DISTRESS AND ADDRESS SPECIFIC CAUSES

An estimated 36% of people with type 2 diabetes experience diabetes distress — the emotional and psychological strain associated with managing diabetes.<sup>1</sup> Though it is frequently overlooked as part of routine diabetes care (possibly because it is not an official diagnosis with an ICD-10 code), it is associated with worse health outcomes.<sup>1,2</sup> Physicians can use validated screenings (available at <https://diabetesdistress.org/dd-assess-score-1>) to assess the severity of distress and identify the specific concerns that are causing it, such as hypoglycemia, long-term health issues, shame/stigma, interpersonal issues, or health care access.

Physicians can then address those concerns, or make referrals to appropriate resources like Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialists, behavioral health, or other social services. Even spending a couple minutes with a patient discussing their emotional well-being can make them feel supported and empowered in their diabetes self-management.

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1. Perrin NE, Davies MJ, Robertson N, Snoek FJ, Khunti K. The prevalence of diabetes-specific emotional distress in people with type 2 diabetes: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Diabet Med*. 2017;34(11):1508-1520.

2. Guerrero Fernández de Alba I, Gimeno-Miguel A, Poblador-Plou B, et al. Association between mental health comorbidity and health outcomes in type 2 diabetes mellitus patients. *Sci Rep*. 2020;10(1):19583.

## INSTITUTE A “CODE WHITE” PROTOCOL FOR WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Health care workers report higher rates of workplace violence than workers in other U.S. industries.<sup>1</sup> Every health care facility should

have a plan for violence that involves a weapon — often referred to as a “code white.” Here are the elements such a plan should include:

- Clear protocols — communicated to all staff — for when and how to activate a code white, and what to do when one is activated. Written guidance can be placed near phones or on employee badges.
- Instructions to take any verbal or physical threat at face value.
- Intercom announcements, computer pop-up alerts, and text message blasts to all staff to deter anyone from entering an unsafe area.
- Instructions for staff to “run, hide, fight,” in that order. Staff with a safe exit path should run as far away as possible. If evacuation is not safe, staff should hide in a room with a locked door, turn off lights and computer screens, crouch down, and put all phones in silent mode. If possible, barricade doors and avoid windows. Staff should confront an attacker or fight back only when there are no other options.
- Instructions for how to behave when law enforcement arrives and how to understand when the threat is gone. Law enforcement may assume anyone could be the perpetrator. Do not move suddenly, keep hands visible, and follow instructions. Stay hidden and do not leave an area until law enforcement or security communicates an “all clear” status.

Practicing responses to workplace violence reinforces appropriate behaviors and helps minimize confusion and response time. How-

ever, unannounced practice can cause unnecessary distress and unsafe situations.

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1. Occupational violence. National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. Reviewed Aug. 31, 2022. Accessed Dec. 27, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/violence/default.html>

## MAKE EMPATHY SUSTAINABLE

People who work with empathetic managers in empathetic organizations are more satisfied with their jobs, less likely to report severe burnout, more resilient, and less likely to quit. However, empathy without limits can be an occupational hazard for any manager or health care leader. Taking on other people's distress is emotionally draining.

You can finetune your empathy and make it more sustainable with a few practical steps:

1. Practice self-compassion by acknowledging and processing the distress that comes from caring about the pain of others.
2. Focus more on “empathic concern” (wanting to help improve others’ well-being) and less on “emotional empathy” (taking on their emotions).
3. Understand that sustainable empathy is a skill you can develop with practice. Emotional workplace situations are not challenges to avoid but opportunities for growth.

Source: Zaki J. How to sustain your empathy in difficult times. *Harvard Business Review*. January/February 2024. <https://hbr.org/2024/01/how-to-sustain-your-empathy-in-difficult-times>

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