** STREAM:**

**Prioritizing Mental Health**

1. **Physician Mental Health & Distress**

PARTNER & GROUP ACTIVITIES: discussions

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY: Self-reflect and identify your individual signals of distress

Examples: irritability, temper flares, withdrawal or isolation from others, anxiety, depression, sleep changes… WHAT ARE YOURS?

1. **Approaching a Colleague**



PARTNER ACTIVITY: [How to ask "Are you OK?" | R U OK?](https://www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask)

GROUP ACTIVITY: Experience with Reaching Out

PARTNER ACTIVITY: Approaching a Colleague

**Instructions:** If 2 in group, then assume roles as **CONCERNED COLLEAGUE** and **POTENTIALLY STRUGGLING COLLEAGUE.** If 3 in group, 3rd is **OBSERVER.** **PLEASE READ ONLY YOUR ROLE BELOW.**

**CONCERNED COLLEAGUE**

The goal of this role play is to express support, to practice active listening skills and assess if your colleague could benefit from mental health support/treatment.

You have always found your colleague to have a positive attitude, and be engaging. Over the past 2 weeks you have noticed that they seem to become frustrated more easily, have a more negative attitude towards staff and parents, and to spend more time alone. Today on rounds when a parent expressed frustration to the team about how long the work up was taking for their child, your colleague walked out of the room saying, “I give up, nothing is good enough even though you try your best. I’ve had it.” You are concerned that they may be struggling and want to reach out and offer support and determine if there may be a more serious mental health concern going on.

You have invited him/her for coffee and are now meeting together.

Coffee chat conversation prompts:

*“I’m concerned because I noticed… and I’m here to support you.”*

*“I’d like to learn more about what you’ve been experiencing in order to be a supportive colleague to you.”*

*“When you say \_\_\_, it makes me wonder if you’ve had thoughts about ending your life.”*

*Remember:*

* You will not make someone suicidal by asking about suicidal thoughts.
* You might miss an opportunity to save someone’s life by not asking.

If you meet with some resistance or minimization. Perhaps remind your colleague that you are reaching out because you care about them, NOT because they are not performing well, and you mean this to be a safe, judgment-free zone.

Another approach is to share if you’ve received mental health support or treatment in the past to imply that it’s a sign of strength not weakness to get help, and that mental health concerns are important to address.

**POTENTIALLY STRUGGLING COLLEAGUE**

You have usually enjoyed your work as a pediatrician or pediatric resident, and are known to, have a positive attitude and to enjoy spending time with colleagues. 2 weeks ago your mother who had been diagnosed with breast cancer earlier this year and is receiving chemotherapy is currently in the hospital with pneumonia. She is in a different state and while your father and sibling are there, you feel conflicted because you are quite close to her and want to be there too. You haven’t shared this information with anyone at work.

You have noticed that over the past 2 weeks you are a bit shorter tempered and haven’t wanted to socialize with your colleagues. Today at the end of rounds, the mother of one of your patients expressed frustration with you and the team as it was taking longer than she had expected to have the work of her child. You walked out of the room stating, “I give up, nothing is good enough even though you try your best. I’ve had it.” You are struggling to keep it all together, having trouble sleeping and not feeling yourself.

One of your colleagues has now asked you to take a coffee break. You agree although all you want to do is get your work done.

* If he/she begins by asking you how you are, state you are fine and no worries. You are somewhat concerned that he/she is meeting with you because you aren’t doing your job effectively.
* If he/she gives more specific examples of why they are worried, be open to sharing some of your stressors, e.g. about your mom, or the changes you’ve noticed in your sleep, irritability etc. And be open to what they suggest to you.

**OBSERVER:**

Your role is to observe the encounter and jot down observations. At the end of the encounter,

ask the CONCERNED COLLEAGUE what they thought went well, what were the challenges,

then ask the POTENTIALLY STRUGGLING COLLEAGUE the same questions. Then end by sharing your observations/insights.

Resources for Support

1. [Physician Support Line](https://www.physiciansupportline.com/)

**1 (888) 409-0141**

<https://www.physiciansupportline.com/>

Psychiatrists helping US physician and medical student colleagues navigate the many intersections of our personal and professional lives.

Free, Confidential & Anonymous

No appointment necessary

Call for any issue, not just a crisis

They report to no one

Open Monday to Friday (except federal holidays)

8:00 AM - 12:00 AM ET

2. Warmlines - Mental Health America

If you are in need of support, but not in crisis, consider reaching out to a warmline

The website [**warmline.org**](http://warmline.org/) keeps an up-to-date list of local and nationwide warmlines across the United States

Sometimes you just need to talk to someone about your mental health. It’s great when you can reach out to a loved one—but that’s not always possible. Fortunately, warmlines are there to help!

A warmline is a phone number you call to have a conversation with someone who can provide support during hard times. Whether you’re in crisis or just need someone to talk to, a warmline can help. Warmlines are staffed by trained peers who have been through their own mental health struggles and know what it’s like to need help.