

Navigating Conversations about Election Stress with Your Teams

With a big election day upon us, many may be feeling stress amidst the uncertainty, regardless of political leaning. This document provides some tips and guidance about how to have inclusive and psychologically safe conversations with your team.

Things to Consider

- **Be self-aware.** Identify and name your own feelings and emotions in regard to the situation. Spend some time learning to recognize when different feelings or emotions are being triggered. Physical sensations, such as accelerated heart rate with fear or uncertainty, are often a good indicator.
- **Not everyone shares the same political beliefs.** This may be obvious, but it is very important not to make assumptions about the ways your peers may vote. All teams should share a mutual respect and understanding for each other's beliefs while also upholding [Duke Health's Mission, Vision, and Values](#). Use non-judgmental language, avoid over-generalizing, and make efforts to notice how others may be feeling.
- **Focus on addressing the uncertainty that a big election brings, not the candidates.** Regardless of political leaning, elections bring uncertainty. This year in particular may have delayed results due to record increases in the number of mail-in voters, which could increase the stress felt by your peers. Instead of talking about whether Candidate X, Y, or Z will win and what that means, aim your conversation at the idea of helping your team member(s) cope with the unknown while results are finalized.
- **When the results are in, look for ways to move forward together.** Aim to move away from polarizing language ("I was right, you were wrong") to conversation that finds a way for everyone to take positive next steps.

Suggested Questions and Responses

- I understand that you are feeling some stress about the results of the election. What strategies are you using to cope with those feelings of uncertainty, and can I support your well-being efforts with additional resources?
- It seems that this was not the news you wanted to hear. What is one thing you can do to cope?
- I appreciate your comments about Candidate X, and I'm so glad you have had/will have the chance to vote for who you think is the best candidate. However, let's make sure we are mindful of the fact that others may support a different candidate, and that is OK.
- I am noticing that some of our team members may be feeling overwhelmed. Would you, Peer X, be able to help me create a psychologically safe space by being a role model for mutual respect and self-care?

Resources

- If your team needs some well-being support, check out bit.ly/dukewellsupport. The site contains a wide variety of resources that may reduce stress and enhance well-being.
- See the "Post-Election Events" section on [this Duke Graduate school page](#) for panels and assessment by experts.