

# Caring for Ourselves and Each Other: Support for Educators Impacted by Recent Immigration Deportation Activity and Community Unrest



In light of the recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deportation raids, detentions, and related community protests occurring in Los Angeles and across the country, we want to acknowledge the fear, disruption and grief many may be experiencing—both as educators and as members of impacted communities. We understand that these events affect not only our students and families, but also our educators and school staff with deep personal ties to immigrant communities. Whether you are navigating concern for your students or facing the trauma of a family member, neighbor, or friend being detained or deported, these moments can feel overwhelming, isolating, and emotionally exhausting. These events can trigger a wide range of emotions: anxiety, sadness, hypervigilance, helplessness, and even anger. Children and adults alike may experience changes in sleep, appetite, focus, and behavior. For educators witnessing their students' distress, or experiencing it themselves, this can be a heavy burden to carry.

**Supporting Students and Children:** Children of all ages may be directly or indirectly impacted by what's happening. For younger children, keep language simple and focus on safety and reassurance. For older youth, engage in honest, supportive conversations and offer space for them to express their fears or questions. Maintain consistency and emotional availability—these offer powerful protection.

**For Educators Personally Affected:** If you have family, friends, or community members who have been detained or deported:

- Allow yourself space to grieve and process.
- Use your EASE benefits for confidential, short-term counseling and support.
- Set boundaries where needed; emotional labor has limits.
- Remember: Caring for yourself is not selfish, it is essential.

**Understanding Common Stress Reactions and Trauma:** Individuals may experience a wide range of emotional and physical stress reactions. For many, these reactions may be tied not only to the immediate situation, but also to deeper trauma—whether personal, historical, racial, or community-based. Traumatic stress is complex and often rooted in experiences of injustice, inequity, and generational harm. These experiences can be triggered in the present moment, especially when events feel threatening or reminiscent of past trauma. It is not uncommon for people to feel overwhelmed without fully realizing that their reactions are connected to longstanding, multi-generational trauma.

## Signs of Traumatic Stress May Include:

- **Emotional and cognitive reactions:** shock, confusion, disorientation, denial, difficulty concentrating
- **Psychological distress:** anxiety, fear, panic, grief, guilt, hopelessness, helplessness
- **Mood changes:** irritability, frustration, anger outbursts, tearfulness
- **Behavioral responses:** withdrawal or isolation, loss of interest in usual activities, increased use of substances (e.g., smoking, alcohol, drugs)
- **Physical symptoms:** trouble eating or sleeping, headaches, chest pain, dizziness, shaking, and other somatic complaints

These reactions may appear within hours or days of an incident, or they may surface weeks or even months later, especially if the stressor is ongoing or cumulative in nature. Emotional recovery looks different for everyone. Recognizing these responses as valid and rooted in real experiences is an important step toward healing. If you or someone you know is experiencing any of these symptoms, please know that support is available and you are not alone.

**Strategies for Coping and Building Resilience:** When experiencing stress related to deportation, immigration enforcement, or community disruption, it's important to take proactive steps to care for your emotional and physical well-being. The following strategies can support your mental health and help foster resilience:

- **Limit news and social media exposure.** Overexposure to distressing content—whether on TV, online, or social media—can increase anxiety and emotional fatigue. Take regular breaks and set boundaries around how often and when you check the news.
- **Stay socially connected.** Talking with trusted friends, family, or colleagues can provide comfort and reduce isolation. You don't have to talk about the event—simply being around others who care can offer grounding and reassurance.
- **Prioritize restful sleep.** Maintain a consistent sleep schedule and create a calm sleep environment. Avoid screens before bed, and if you struggle to sleep, try relaxation techniques like breathing exercises or calming audio.
- **Practice relaxation and mindfulness.** Use techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, guided imagery, or stretching. Even short moments of calm can help regulate stress. Active options like yoga or walking can also be effective.
- **Engage in physical activity.** Movement helps release tension and improves mood. Whether it's structured exercise, dancing, or taking a walk, physical activity can support emotional recovery and boost energy.
- **Get informed and prepared.** Learning about your rights, safety plans, and local resources can help reduce fear and increase a sense of control. Knowledge empowers and prepares you to respond more effectively.
- **Balance your perspective.** During times of crisis, it's easy to focus only on what's wrong. Make space to reflect on the people, moments, or values that bring hope and meaning to your life. This can help shift your outlook.
- **Engage in meaningful activity.** Doing something that brings purpose—such as helping others, being creative, or planning something you enjoy—can boost your sense of agency and provide emotional relief.
- **Seek support when needed.** If feelings of distress or anxiety persist or interfere with daily life, reach out for help. Professional counseling can provide valuable tools and support for healing and coping.

## Reach Out for Support

As educators, we lead with heart. But even the strongest among us need care, community, and rest. Please take time to check in with yourself, check in with each other, and seek support when needed. EASE stands with you and is ready to walk alongside you during these difficult times. You do not have to carry this alone. We offer **free, confidential mental health services** to LA County member district employees and families.

**Call EASE at 1-800-882-1341**- available 24/7.

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