How to support Black employees in times of racial crisis

STEP 1: Prepare		
STRATEGY	**HOW**	**WHY**
Deepen your knowledge	Educate yourself about immediate events as well as the larger historical context. This **video** is a good start. Read public posts by Black people to understand how they are currently navigating the workplace emotionally. **Here** is one example. Linkedin is another useful resource.	This insight and knowledge are critical for deepening your emotional understanding of Black people's experiences. The empathy you build will equip you to engage with your Black employee(s) more authentically.
Acknowledge your emotional state	Reflect on your own reactions to recent events, especially as you continue to educate yourself. Employ the recommendations outlined in this **article**. • *Figure yourself out*—acknowledge your feelings and understand where they are coming from • *Address your feelings* without becoming emotionally leaky—find ways of expressing and managing your emotions apart from your employees • *Avoid oversharing*—once you have addressed your feelings consider which ones are or are not productive to share with your team	Acknowledging and managing your emotions enables you to meet your employees with empathy, rather than (inadvertently) burdening them with your emotions.

STEP 2: Reach in to your Black employee(s)		
STRATEGY	**HOW**	**WHY**
Reach in asynchronously	Use email or text.	This way, your employee has time to consider whether they want to talk without feeling obliged or put on the spot.
Set clear expectations	Tell your employee they do not need to respond to you. Also make clear that your role is to support them however they need.	This makes it clear that you respect personal preferences for disclosure and vulnerability.
	If your employee does not respond, do not press the issue. Instead, clearly communicate when you will check back in with them (ex: tomorrow, Friday, etc).	Consistent follow up will help build trust, especially in relationships where discussing race is new.
	If your employee chooses to talk, ask them if they are comfortable with you addressing recent events with the team as a whole and, if so, how they would like this to take place.	This invites your employee to have a voice in what solidarity looks like. Not consulting your Black employee first can cause them to feel singled out or overburdened in a team setting.
Be specific when asking how you can best provide support	Go beyond the usual "How are you?" Ask **specific questions** about employees' well-being. ("How are you, really?" Or "Are you sleeping?") Also directly ask what you or Upwork can do to support their needs. ("What additional resources do you need right now?" or "Is there something the company can do to make your life easier?")	This allows you to hone in on how best to help and can reveal gaps in company resources and programs.

STEP 3: Reach in to your team

NOTE: Only execute on Step 3 if 1) your team does not include Black people or 2) your Black employee(s) agreed that broaching as a team would be helpful.

STRATEGY	HOW	WHY
Model and request solidarity	Talk with your team about the specific antiracist steps you are taking to support Black teammates and the Black community more broadly.	Teams will be looking to you as an example as they develop their own techniques for supporting one another.
	Discuss how the team can support one another.	This is an important way for you to establish accountability with and amongst your team.
Interrupt ignorant statements in the moment	If a teammate says something ignorant during a team meeting, calmly but immediately stop them. This might feel uncomfortable, but this is part of your role as a manager.	Publicly and firmly stopping ignorant comments provides an opportunity for you to model inclusive behaviors and shape team norms.
	After the meeting, follow up with them 1:1 to discuss why that statement was not ok and support them in reflecting on it. Here is a **list** of ways to frame your response.	While it is important to practice having conversations about race, we need to establish guardrails for when and how they will take place.