Building, Bolstering, and Borrowing Resilience: Psychological First Aid

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Objectives

At the end of this presentation, the learner will be able to:

• Understand the concept and need for Psychological First Aid.
• Identify stress and its effects during disasters, mass violence, and other crises.
• Understand the Core Actions of Psychological First Aid.
• Review several practical tips for dealing with psychological health issues in community disaster situations.
Mental Health Considerations after Disaster

• Physical, general medical, and economic impact of disasters is devastating
• Response and resources can be more easily calculated for problems observed by look/listen/feel
• Following disasters and violence, other sequelae are often overlooked:
  • Emotional, psychological
  • Moral
  • Spiritual
  • Sociocultural
No matter where you are or what you are doing, stress is a natural, needed reaction for survival.

**Definition:** A physical and psychological process that results from perceiving an event as a threat while also perceiving a limited number of choices in how to deal with that threat.

Most stress-related responses are short-term.

However, sometimes symptoms persist and should be addressed to prevent long-term problems.
Support for PFA

- Evidence-informed and supported by experts
  - World Health Organization: Downloadable field guide - “psychological first aid, rather than psychological debriefing, should be offered to people in severe distress after being recently exposed to a traumatic event” (p. ii)
  - Sphere Standards
    - Endorsed by Mental Health Standard 2.5
    - Key action 4: “Orient staff and volunteers on how to offer psychological first aid”
  - National Child Traumatic Stress Network
  - National Center for PTSD
  - American Red Cross
Support for PFA

- Public health perspective
  - Mental health “casualties” > physical casualties
  - Psychological distress, trauma & suicide were potentially contagious
  - Due to shortage of mental health clinicians, PFA is meant for use by personnel outside mental health

After a traumatic event, it is important that those affected be provided, in an empathic manner, **practical, pragmatic psychological support**
Purpose of PFA

- Supportive and compassionate presence/response
- Mitigate acute distress
- Facilitate access to continued care, if needed and available
- Not a clinical or emergency psychiatric intervention/assessment
- Adapts to needs of each individual/community and does not conflict with their cultural/religious views
- To foster natural coping mechanisms
Eight PFA Core Actions

• Contact and Engagement
• Safety and Comfort
• Stabilization
• Information Gathering on Current Needs and Concerns
• Practical Assistance
• Connection with Social Supports
• Information on Coping
• Linkage with Collaborative Services
Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR)

• Gathering Information and Prioritizing Assistance
• Building Problem-Solving Skills
• Promoting Positive Activities
• Managing Reactions
• Promoting Helpful Thinking
• Rebuilding Healthy Social Connections
That being said, print and bring! Don’t count on WiFi!

PFA Mobile

Following disasters or emergencies, the PFA Mobile™ app can assist responders who provide Psychological First Aid (PFA) to adults, families, and children. Materials in PFA Mobile™ are adapted from the Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide (2nd Edition). PFA Mobile™ allows responders to:

- Review the 8 core PFA actions
- Match PFA interventions to specific stress reactions of survivors
- Hear mentor tips for applying PFA in the field
- Self-assess to determine their readiness to conduct PFA
- Assess and track survivors’ needs—simplifying data collection and making referrals

Download PFA Mobile™

Download PFA Mobile™ free from iTunes and Google Play.

PFA Mobile™ is now available for mobile Apple devices (iPhone, iPad and iPod touch), and Android devices.
Help Kids Cope App

Does your family ever talk about disasters **BEFORE** they happen? (How about **NOW**?)

Parents may wonder:

- “How do I talk to my kids before, during, and after disasters?”
- “How can I help my child stay calm when we evacuate in a wildfire?”
- “What reactions from my child are common and when should I seek help?”

**Help Kids Cope** will help parents talk to their kids about the disasters they may face and know how best to support them throughout—whether sheltering-in-place at home, evacuating to a designated shelter, or helping your family heal after reuniting.

**Help Kids Cope** equips parents:

- Learn what to do **BEFORE**, **DURING**, and **AFTER** 10 disaster types.
- Know what to say “in the moment” to support your kids of all ages. Hear audio clips of other parents’ experiences.
- Understand how kids commonly respond during and after disasters.
- Use the checklists to prepare your entire family before disasters.
- Explain different disasters to your kids using age-appropriate language.
- Find tips on caring for yourself as you care for your family.
- Connect to activities, children’s books, tip sheets, and more!

**Download Help Kids Cope:**

Help Kids Cope, by UCLA is free from Google Play and iTunes. Works on Android (4.3 and up) and Apple devices (iPad touch, iPhone, iPad). For iPad users: tap on the iPad Only drop-down menu and select “iPhone Only” from the menu to view and download the app.
National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
#BuildingResiliency19