



# Psychological First Aid

## What is Psychological First Aid?

First Aid is just what its name implies. It is the initial help received by a person in trouble. Such aid should be concerned only with the immediate situation. The First Aid goal should be either to return moderately disabled persons to reasonably good function in a short time, or to make more seriously disabled persons as comfortable as possible until they can be given specific care.

- Accept every person's right to his/her own feelings.
- Attempt to calm the victim, relieve the anxiety and stress.
- Communicate confidence in yourself.
- Accept a person's limitations as real.
- Contact members of his/her family or support system.
- Size-up a disturbed person's abilities as accurately and quickly as possible.
- Encourage the person to speak freely about whatever is on their mind, allowing them to "vent" their feelings.
- When the person begins talking, interrupt as little as possible. After you have heard the full story, you can ask for details. Practice "active listening."
- Do not argue with the person if he/she disagrees with you.
- In helping a child, deal with the issues indirectly, and provide them with food and comfort.
- Do not impose your methods of problem solving upon the disaster victim; his/her own solutions will be the most successful for him/her.
- Accept your own limitations in a relief role. Do not attempt to be all things to all people.

## Emotional & Psychological Considerations in Disaster

### 1. Factors of the disaster which might affect the emotional recovery process:

- Was the family separated? If a family can be evacuated as a unit, the concern regarding the whereabouts and condition of the family members is not as overwhelming.
- What is the availability of outside help?
- Were appropriate leaders making decisions and giving directions? When this occurs, the frustration and confusion is decreased tremendously.

## Emotional & Psychological Considerations in Disaster (cont.)

- Were communication avenues available for communicating with family and friends and for decreasing community rumors that run rampant?
  - Was evacuation planning organized with concern and regard for people as well as safety?
2. Disaster is a crisis in itself, however disaster and the crisis situation is increased when it is accompanied by:
- Death
  - Injury
  - Family problems
  - Job and/or financial difficulties
  - Illness
  - Loss of personal belongings
3. Factors in dealing with crisis, either your own or that of family or friends:
- The key is to be able to talk about the experience and express the feelings accompanying the experience.
  - To be fully aware of the reality of what has happened.
  - To resume concrete activity and be able to reconstruct the pre-disaster life routine.
4. A key point to remember in disaster preparedness and the psychological facts involved:
- The more planning that can be done *beforehand*, the better the family will be equipped to deal with the disaster.

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