Welcome

Psychological First Aid: Helping Others in Times of Stress

July 2006
Instructor Introductions

- Name
- Background
Housekeeping Items

- Breaks
- Location of restrooms
- Emergency exits
- Cell phones and pagers
- Sign-in sheet, Course Record Addendum (Form 6418A)
- Course Evaluation
Course Purpose

...To enable you to provide basic care, comfort, and support to people who are experiencing disaster-related stress...
Course Objectives

After completing all the segments of this course, you will be able to:

- Notice the signs of stress in clients, co-workers, and yourself.
- Give immediate support to people who may be experiencing stress by implementing PFA principles.
- Obtain additional mental health support for yourself, co-workers, and clients, when needed.
Workshop Design

- Segment 1: Defining Psychological First Aid
- Segment 2: Recognizing Disaster-related Stress
- Segment 3: Embracing the Principles of Psychological First Aid
- Segment 4: Making Appropriate Referrals
- Segment 5: Practicing Psychological First Aid Principles
Segment 1

Defining Psychological First Aid
Segment 1 Objectives

- In addition to understanding the purpose and objectives of the course, you will be able to:
  - Define the concept of Psychological First Aid.
  - Describe the relevance of Psychological First Aid.
What is Psychological First Aid?

- The practice of recognizing and responding to people who need help because they are feeling stress, resulting from the disaster situations within which they find themselves.
Why is PFA Important?

- Knowing how to provide Psychological First Aid can help you to:
  - Create a compassionate environment for disaster survivors and workers.
  - Assess what a person might need at a particular time.
  - Provide immediate support to those in stressful situations.
  - Help others cope in the face of stressful events.
Segment 2

Recognizing Disaster-related Stress
Segment 2 Purpose

Segment 2 focuses on symptoms in the various categories that indicate disaster-related stress in adults and children:

- Feelings, emotional states
- Thinking, expression of thoughts
- Physical effects
- Behaviors
- Spiritual
Segment 2 Objectives

- Describe the typical stress reactions of adults and children that may result from exposure to disaster.
- Identify the characteristics of a disaster and the disaster response that affect individuals’ responses.
- Describe the characteristics of individuals that affect their personal responses.
Stress Reactions of Adults

◆ Stress reactions vary from person to person and:
  ▪ Can disappear.
  ▪ Remain the same.
  ▪ Get somewhat better.
  ▪ Grow considerably worse.

◆ The severity and duration of stress depends on how well people manage and cope with their situations.
Exercise 1

Stress Reactions of Adults

From your own experiences with adults in disaster relief operations, describe how people react when they are in these stressful situations.

Feelings | Thoughts | Physical Effects | Behaviors | Spiritual
Stress Reactions In Adults: Feelings

- Rage, anger, irritability
- Resentment
- Anxiety, fear
- Despair, hopelessness
- Numb
- Terrified
- Guilty
- Sad
- Helpless, loss of control
- Uninterested
- Overwhelmed
Stress Reactions In Adults: Thoughts

- Difficulty concentrating and thinking
- Difficulty making decisions
- Forgetful
- Confused
- Distortion of sense of time
- Lowered self-esteem
- Self-blame
- Intrusive thoughts, memories, flashbacks
- Worry
- A sense of being cut off from reality
- Self-harm
Stress Reactions In Adults: Physical Effects

- Fatigue, difficulty sleeping
- Agitation
- Physical complaints (e.g., headaches, stomach problems)
- Decreased or increased appetite
- Decreased or increased sex drive
- Easily startled
- Increased cravings for and use of caffeine, nicotine, sweets, alcohol, illicit substances
- Lightheaded
- Weak
Stress Reactions In Adults: Behaviors

- Crying spells
- Angry outbursts
- Avoiding people, places, and situations
- Argumentative

- School and work problems
- Risky behaviors (driving erratically, multiple sexual partners, unsafe sex)
- Inattention to appearance, personal hygiene, self-care
Stress Reactions In Adults: Spiritual

- Change in relationship with or belief about God/Higher Power
- Abandonment of prayer, ritual, scripture, devotions, sacraments
- Questioning the beliefs of their faith
- Rejection of spiritual care providers
- Struggle with questions about the meaning of life, justice, fairness, afterlife
- Loss of familiar spiritual supports
- Loss of faith
Stress Reactions of Children

- Stress reactions in children can vary by child and age.
- Children are particularly sensitive to:
  - Separation from familiar surroundings, people, and possessions
  - Disruption of routines
Exercise 2

Stress Reactions of Children

From your own experiences with children in disaster relief operations, describe how children react when they are in these stressful situations.

Feelings Thinking Physical Effects Behaviors
Stress Reactions In Children: Feelings

- Fear, terrified
- Anxious
- Sad
- Guilty
- Rage, anger, irritability helpless
- Loss of interest
- Changing mood
Stress Reactions In Children: Thinking

- Difficulty concentrating and thinking
- Difficulty making decisions
- Forgetful
- Confused
- Distortion of sense of time
- Lowered self-esteem

- Self-blame
- Intrusive thoughts, memories, flashbacks
- Worry
- A sense of being cut off from reality
- Self-harm
Stress Reactions In Children: Physical

- Fatigue, difficulty sleeping
- Agitation
- Increased activity level/hyperactive
- Physical complaints (e.g., headaches, stomach aches)
- Decreased or increased appetite
- Easily startled
- Bed wetting
Stress Reactions In Children: Behaviors

- Crying, whining, screaming
- Trembling
- Clinging to parents and caregivers
- Aggressive or disruptive behavior, temper tantrums
- Withdrawn
- Avoiding people, places, situations
- Regressive behaviors (thumb sucking, bedwetting, not wanting to sleep alone)

- Refusal to attend school or day care
- Difficulty getting along with siblings and parents
- Using drugs and alcohol
- Re-living events through play (young children)
- Asking a lot of questions or telling stories related to event
- Argumentative, defiant
Contributing Factors to the Stress Response

- Disaster characteristics
- Disaster response characteristics
- Individual characteristics
- Factors that affect you as a disaster responder
Disaster Characteristics

- Type of disaster
- When it occurs
- Who is affected
- What is affected
- Where it happens
Disaster Response Characteristics

- Level of preparedness
- Post-disaster living situation (e.g., Individuals may need to evacuate their homes and stay in shelters, with friends or family, or in a hotel.)
- Limited availability of food and water
- Delays in receiving relief services or medical care
Individual Characteristics

- Age
- Gender
- Family composition
- Cultural, ethnic, racial background
- Level of exposure to the disaster
- Loss of or injury to family member, other loved ones, pets
- Loss of possessions
- Pre-disaster stress
- Connectedness with others
Factors that Affect You as a Disaster Responder

- Leaving family members and loved ones to go on assignment
- Working in unfamiliar and challenging settings
- Staying in a staff shelter with little privacy
- Encountering unfamiliar cultural or ethnic populations whose primary language may not be English
- Listening to survivors’ stories
- Seeing disturbing sights
- Working with difficult supervisors and co-workers
- Returning home
Break
Segment 3

Embracing the Principles of Psychological First Aid
Segment 3 Purpose

…To introduce you to the principles of Psychological First Aid…
Segment 3 Objectives

- Describe the categorical principles of PFA.
- Understand the implications and scope of each categorical principle, including the:
  - Awareness you can develop.
  - Attitudes you can adopt.
  - Actions you can take.
Psychological First Aid Actions

- Making a connection
- Helping people be safe
- Being kind, calm, and compassionate
- Meeting people’s basic needs
- Listening
- Giving realistic assurance
- Encouraging good coping
- Helping people connect
- Giving accurate and timely information
- Making a referral to a Disaster Mental Health worker
- Ending the conversation
- Taking care of yourself
Make a Connection

- Introduce yourself.
- Be fully present.
Help People Be Safe

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Enter a scene only when you are sure it is safe.
- Help people to reach a safe place.
- Call for medical assistance, if needed (Call 9-1-1).
- Help people to follow emergency instructions.
Be Kind, Calm, and Compassionate

- Express patience and compassion, even if people are being difficult.
- Speak in a calm voice.
- Remain courteous and respectful of people.
  - Pay attention to cultural appropriateness of physical proximity, eye contact, and gestures.
Meet People’s Basic Needs

◆ Offer or direct them to food and water.
◆ Provide or direct them to a safe place or shelter.
◆ Check to see if they are with family or friends.
◆ Encourage them to sleep and get rest. (e.g., “Take a break, take a walk.”)
◆ Direct them to a Disaster Mental Health worker when needed.
Listen

- Be attentive.
- Listen carefully.
- Be available.
Give Realistic Reassurance

◆ Help people to feel less anxious or worried by letting them know that what they are feeling or thinking is understandable.
Encourage Good Coping
Exercise 3

Coping Strategies

- What are some things that people do in response to stressful situations that may not be helpful in their coping?
- What are some of the things people may do that help them to cope with or endure stressful situations?

Negative Coping Strategies

Positive Coping Strategies
Help People Connect

- Get them access to a phone so they can contact their loved ones.
- Suggest other methods of communication such as e-mail.
- Encourage them to complete the Welfare Information Notification Request form (2079-I), if the Welfare Information Field Team is activated.
Give Accurate and Timely Information

- Guide people to the appropriate sources or resources for information in your setting.
Make a Referral to a Disaster Mental Health Worker

- Know when and how to make a referral.
End the Conversation

- Ask if there is anything else you can do to assist him or her.
- Provide clients with available phones numbers or other contact information.
Take Care of Yourself

Model the behaviors you teach to others!
Segment 4

Making Appropriate Referrals
Segment 4 Purpose

…To learn to identify individuals who may need additional support from a Disaster Mental Health worker…
Segment Objectives

- Identify the boundaries of PFA and your ability to provide help.
- Understand the purpose and use of the “PsySTART™ Field Triage Tag as a method for identifying persons who may need additional help.
- Recognize situations requiring referrals to Red Cross Disaster Mental Health.
Linking with Disaster Mental Health

- Triage strategies
  - Position yourself to recognize individuals who need additional services
  - Use the PsySTART™ Field Triage Tag to evaluate those who are at risk
  - Link individuals at risk with DMH
When to link with DMH

- Link with DMH Services when individuals:
  - Express the desire or intent to harm themselves or others.
  - Show extreme reactions that do not improve or seem to worsen.
  - Experience the loss of a loved one, or serious injuries to themselves or to loved ones, or the situation where a loved one is unaccounted for or missing.
Review the PsySTART™ Field Triage Tag before each disaster relief assignment.

- Place a copy in your “go-bag.”
- Review the questions on the card.
- Keep a wallet-sized with you.
If “yes” is indicated in response to any of the first nine questions (notice the yellow and orange yes boxes), then:

- Contact a DMH worker as soon as practical.
- Provide enough information, so that the Red Cross DMH worker can locate the individual later.

If “yes” is indicated in response to either one or both of the two last questions (harm to self or others), then:

- Make certain someone stays with individual.
- Notify the site supervisor and DMH worker immediately.
Wallet-sized PsySTART™ Field Triage Tag

- Keep this card with you in pocket or wallet.
- Use as a reference when providing information to your supervisor or a DMH worker.
- Include important DMH contact information on the bottom of the card.
Getting Help Fast

- Get help immediately, if an individual:
  - Threatens to harm or kill himself/herself or others.
  - Cannot be calmed after you have used the principles of PFA and have made attempts to comfort and respond to her/his requests and/or needs
  - Behaves erratically and exhibits questionable judgment, because he or she is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
  - Acts confused and disoriented, saying or doing things that do not make sense in the context of the situation and that may result in harm to himself/herself or others.
Break
Segment 5

Practicing Psychological First Aid Principles
Segment 5 Purpose

...To put into practice the principles and actions of PFA...
Segment 5 Objectives

- Understand the governing attitudes and behaviors that presuppose the success of PFA.
- Practice using the actions of PFA in scenario-based exercises.
PFA in Action: Now you can do it!

- Be tolerant.
- Keep boundaries.
- Respect people’s privacy.
- Ask for help.
- Take care of yourself.
## Dos and Don’ts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior (your actions and body language)</th>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Do Not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                                          | Sit facing or directly beside the client or worker.  
|                                          | Make eye contact as appropriate, depending upon cultural expectations. | Sit back with your arms folded in front of you.  
|                                          |                                              | Look around the room or appear distracted while the client/worker is talking to you.  
|                                          |                                              | Walk away from the client or worker while he or she is talking to you. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression (what you say and how you say it)</th>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Do Not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                                              | “It sounds like that may have been a very difficult (frustrating/frightening/stressful) situation?”  
|                                              | “Is there anything I can do for you right now?” | “You should be thankful that you and your family got out alive.”  
|                                              |                                              | “Look, I really don’t have time to listen to this…”  
|                                              |                                              | “That doesn’t sound so bad…you should hear what this other guy went through.”  
|                                              |                                              | “It must have been God’s will.”  
|                                              |                                              | “You really shouldn’t feel that way.”  
|                                              |                                              | “Don’t feel (guilty, bad, nervous, etc.).” |
Exercise 4

Make a connection    Be kind, calm, and compassionate    Listen
Help people be safe    Meet people’s basic needs    Give reassurance

Pulling It All Together in Practice

This exercise is intended to explore various situations in which PFA should be used. Your objective is to determine what you will say and how you will act to offer PFA to those individuals described in the scenarios.

Encourage good coping    Give accurate and timely information    Help people connect
Make a referral to Disaster Mental Health    End the conversation
Scenario 1
Course Summary

- Self-review questions and answers
- Clarification of concepts
- Wrap-up