

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID OVERVIEW

- ▶ **Military research on ‘combat fatigue’**
 - ▶ Brevity, Immediacy, Centrality, Expectancy, Proximity, Simplicity
- ▶ **Underpinned by five essential elements**
 - ▶ Safety, calming, connectedness, self-efficacy, and hope
- ▶ **Most favored early intervention approach in the 2000s**
 - ▶ WHO, SAMHSA, Red Cross, Military, Universities
 - ▶ Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
 - ▶ Resiliency Approach
- ▶ “... evidence informed but without proof of effectiveness...”
- ▶ WHO and Red Cross offer courses – today’s presentation from WHO

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID: GUIDE FOR FIELD WORKERS

- WHO publication

http://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/en/

- Collaborative effort:
 - World Health Organization
 - War Trauma Foundation
 - World Vision International
- Endorsed by 24 UN/NGO international agencies
- Available in numerous languages

Psychological first aid: Guide for field workers



World Health
Organization

WAR TRAUMA
FOUNDATION

World Vision



WHAT IS A CRISIS EVENT??

- Large events affecting many people
 - Natural disasters, plane crash, war/conflict
 - and
- Events affecting individuals
 - Car accident, robbery, home fire

Differences are community impact, scale of need, resources and publicity. But emotions the same.

PFA PHILOSOPHY

- Humane, supportive and practical assistance to fellow human beings who recently suffered exposure to serious stressors, and involves:
 - Non--intrusive, practical care and support
 - Assessing needs and concerns
 - Helping people to address basic needs (food, water)
 - Listening, but not pressuring people to talk
 - Comforting people and helping them to feel calm
 - Helping people connect to information, services and social supports
 - Protecting people from further harm


PREPARE

LOOK

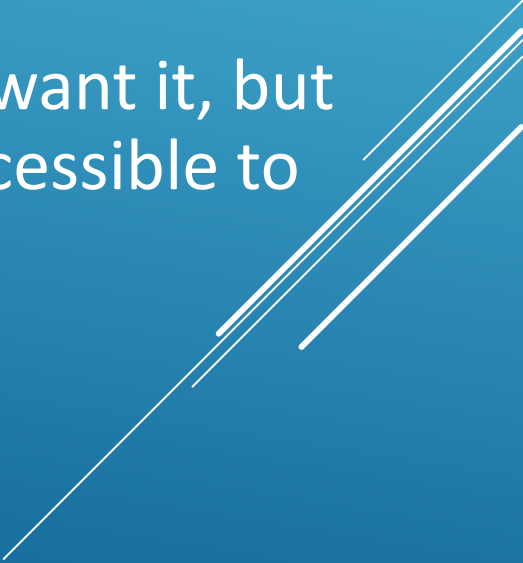
LISTEN

LINK

WHAT PFA IS NOT?

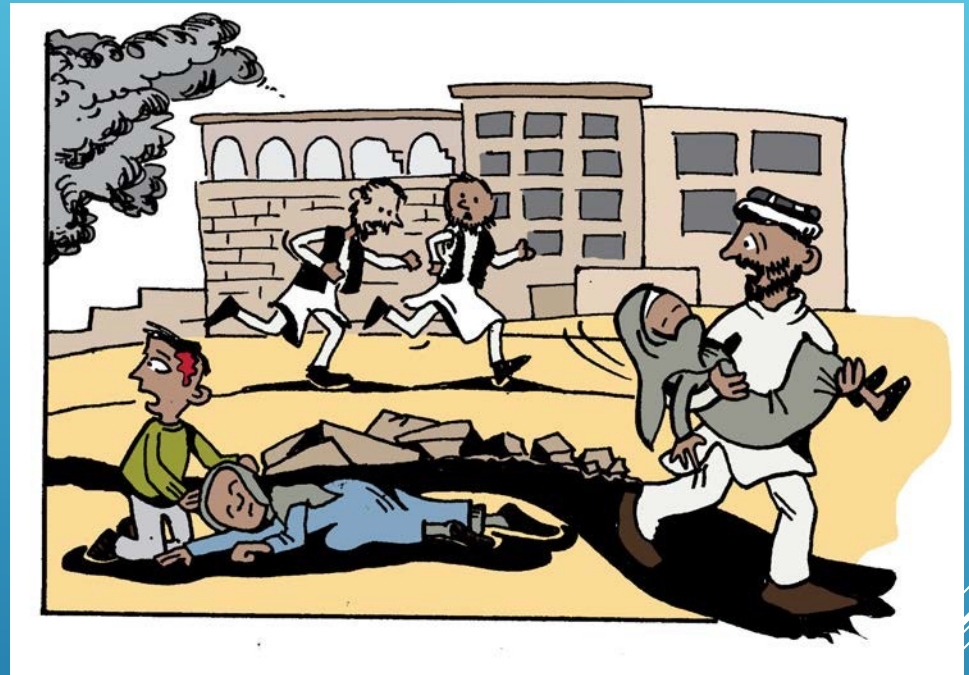
- It is NOT something only professionals can do
 - It is NOT professional counselling
 - It is NOT “psychological debriefing”
 - No detailed discussion of the distressing event
 - It is NOT asking people to analyze what happened or put time and events in order
 - Although PFA involves being available to listen to people’s stories, it is NOT pressuring people to tell you their feelings or reactions to an event
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PFA: WHO?

- Distressed people who were recently exposed to a serious stressful event
 - Can be provided to adults and children
 - Not everyone who experiences a crisis event will need or want PFA
 - Don't force help on those who don't want it, but make yourself available and easily accessible to those who may want support
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WHO NEEDS MORE ADVANCED SUPPORT THAN PFA ALONE?

- People with serious life-threatening injuries
- People so upset they cannot care for themselves or their children
- People who may hurt themselves
- People who may hurt or endanger the lives of others




PFA: WHEN?


- Upon first contact with very distressed people, usually immediately following an event, or sometimes a few days or weeks after



PFA: WHERE?

- Wherever it is safe enough for you to be there
 - Ideally with some privacy (as appropriate) to protect confidentiality and dignity of the affected person
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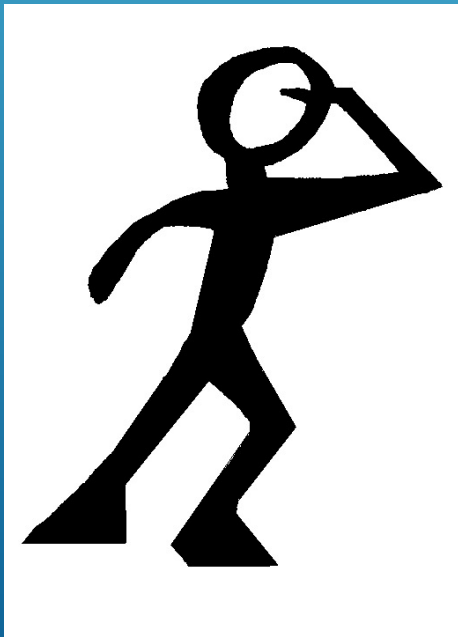
Frequent Needs of People After Crisis Events

- Basic needs: shelter, food, water, sanitation
 - Health services for injuries or help with chronic medical conditions
 - Understandable and correct information about event, loved ones and available services
 - Being able to contact loved ones
 - Access to specific support related to one's culture or religion
 - Being consulted and involved in important decisions
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PFA ACTION PRINCIPLES

Prepare

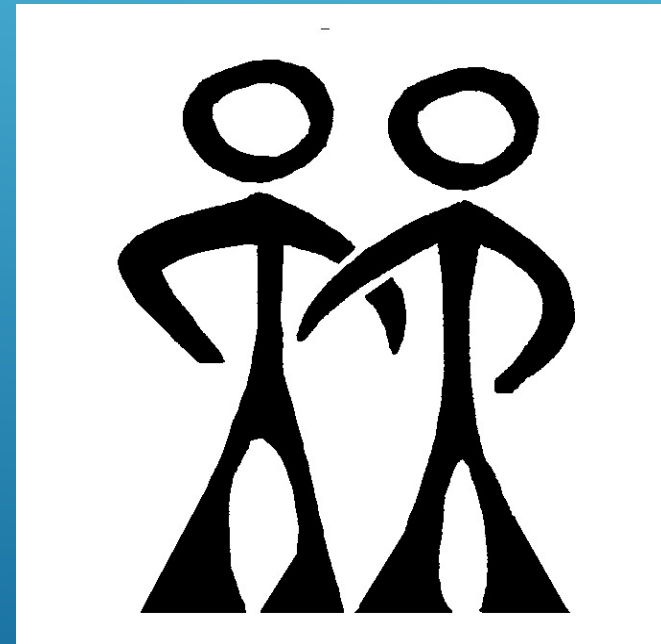
Look



Listen



Link



PREPARE

- Learn about the crisis event.
- Learn about available services and supports.
- Learn about safety and security concerns.

- Crisis situations can be chaotic
- They often require urgent action



Wherever possible BEFORE you enter a crisis site, try to obtain accurate information so you can be safe and effective.

<h1>Prepare</h1>	<p>Before you enter a crisis site, try to learn about...</p>
<h2>The Crisis Event</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened?• Where?• When?• How many and who are affected?
<h2>Available Services</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is providing for basic needs (emergency medical care, food shelter)?• When and where can people access services?• Who is helping, including community members?
<h2>Safety and Security</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the crisis over or ongoing (aftershocks, fighting)?• What dangers may be in the environment?• Are there places to avoid due to insecurity or because it is not permitted to be there?

TAKE A SELF CHECK

- What I do to take care of myself?
- What does my team (family, colleagues) do to take care of each other?
- Sustainable response?
- Other obligations?



LOOK



- Take time – even a quick scan – to LOOK around before offering help
 - Be calm
 - Be safe
- Think before you act
- Crisis situations can change rapidly
- What you encounter may be different from what you learned before entering

Look



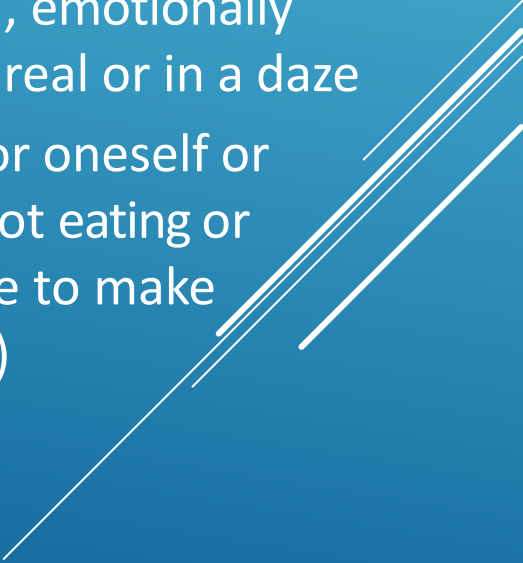
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•What dangers can you observe?•Can you be there without harm to yourself or others?	<p>If you're not certain about safety...DO NOT GO! Seek help from others.</p> <p>Communicate from a safe distance.</p>
People with obvious urgent basic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Is anyone critically injured•Does anyone need rescue?•Does anyone have obvious needs (e.g., torn clothing)?•Who may need help to access services or to be protected?•Who else is available to help?	<p>Know your role. Try to obtain help for people who need special assistance.</p> <p>Refer critically injured people for care.</p>
People with serious distress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•How many times where are they?•Is anyone extremely upset, immobile, not responding to others or in shock?	<p>Consider who may benefit from PFA and how best to help.</p>

PEOPLE WHO LIKELY NEED SPECIAL ATTENTION (TO BE SAFE... TO ACCESS SERVICES)

- Children and adolescents
 - Especially those separated from caregivers
- People with health conditions and disabilities
 - People who are non-mobile, or who have chronic illness, hearing/visual impairments (deaf or blind), or severe mental disorders
 - Frail elderly people, pregnant or nursing women
- People at risk of discrimination or violence
 - Women, people of certain ethnic or religious groups, people with mental disabilities



DISTRESS REACTIONS TO A CRISIS

- Physical symptoms (shaking, headaches, fatigue, loss of appetite, aches and pains)
 - Anxiety, fear
 - Weeping, grief and sadness
 - Guilt, shame (for having survived, or for not saving others)
 - Elation for having survived
 - Being on guard, jumpy
 - Anger, irritability
 - Immobile, withdrawn
 - Disoriented – not knowing one's name, where one is from or what happened
 - Not responding to others, not speaking at all
 - Feeling confused, emotionally numb, feeling unreal or in a daze
 - Unable to care for oneself or one's children (not eating or drinking, not able to make simple decisions)
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HELPING PEOPLE IN DISTRESS



- **Most people recover well over time, especially if their basic needs are met**
- **Those with severe or long--lasting distress may require more support**
 - Try to make sure they are not left alone.
 - Try to keep them safe until the reaction passes or you can find help from others.



LISTEN

<p>Make contact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approach respectfully• Introduce yourself by name and organization• Ask if you can provide help, find safe/quiet place• Help person feel comfortable (water, blanket)• Try to keep them safe.
<p>Ask about needs and concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Although some needs are obvious, always ask• Find out person's priorities – what is most important to them.
<p>Listen and help people feel calm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay close to the person• Do not pressure them to talk• Listen in case they want to talk• If very distressed, help them feel calm and make sure they are not alone.



HELP PEOPLE FEEL CALM

- Keep your tone of voice soft and calm
- Maintain some eye contact
- Reassure them they are safe and that you are there to help
- If someone feels “unreal,” help them to make contact with:
 - Themselves (feel feet on the floor, tap hands on lap)
 - Their surroundings (notice things around them)
 - Their breath (focus on breath and breathe slowly)



Listen



- Make contact with people who may need support.
- Ask about people's needs and concerns.
- Listen to people and help them feel calm.

Listen with compassion by using your:

Eyes – giving the person your undivided attention

Ears – hearing carefully their concerns

Heart – with caring and showing respect

GOOD COMMUNICATION: THINGS TO SAY AND DO



- Try to find a quiet place to talk and minimize outside distractions.
- Stay near the person but keep an appropriate distance depending on their age, gender and culture.
- Let them know you hear them, for example, nod your head and say... *"hmmmm."*
- Be patient and calm.
- Provide factual information IF you have it. Be honest about what you know and what you don't know. *"I don't know but I will try to find out about that for you."*
- Give information in a way the person can understand – keep it simple.
- Acknowledge how they are feeling, and any losses or important events they share with you, such as loss of home or death of a loved one. *"I'm so sorry..."*
- Respect privacy. Keep the person's story confidential, especially when they disclose very private events.
- Acknowledge the person's strengths and how they have helped themselves.

GOOD COMMUNICATION: THINGS NOT TO SAY AND DO

- Don't pressure someone to tell their story.
- Don't interrupt or rush someone's story.
- Don't give your opinions of the person's situation, just listen.
- Don't touch the person if you're not sure it is appropriate to do so.
- Don't judge what they have or haven't done, or how they are feeling. Don't say... " *You shouldn't feel that way.*" or "*You should feel lucky you survived.*"
- Don't make up things you don't know.
- Don't use too technical terms.
- Don't tell them someone else's story.
- Don't talk about your own troubles.
- Don't give false promises or false reassurances.
- Don't feel you have to try to solve all the person's problems for them.
- Don't take away the person's strength and sense of being able to care for themselves.

LINK



- Help people address basic needs and access services
- Help people cope with problems
- Give information
- Connect people with loved ones and social support



Help people to help themselves and
regain control of their situation.

▶ Don't forget pets





LINK – BASIC NEEDS



- What needs do they request?
- What services are available?
- Don't overlook the needs of vulnerable or marginalized people
- Follow up if you promise to do so



LINK – HELP PEOPLE COPE WITH PROBLEMS




Distressed people may feel overwhelmed with worries...

- Help them prioritize urgent needs (what to do first)
- Help them identify supports in their life
- Give practical suggestions how they can meet their needs (e.g. registering for food aid)
- Help them remember how they coped in the past and what helps them to feel better.

POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES (adjust for culture)

Help people use their natural coping mechanisms to regain a sense of control:

- Get enough rest
 - Eat as regularly as possible and drink water
 - Talk and spend time with family and friends
 - Discuss problems with someone you trust
 - Relax: walk, sing, pray, play with children
 - Exercise
 - Avoid alcohol or drugs, caffeine, nicotine
 - Attend to personal hygiene
 - Find safe ways to help others
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LINK – GIVE INFORMATION



- Find accurate information before helping
- Keep updated
- Make sure people are informed where to how to access services – especially vulnerable people
- Say ONLY what you know – don't make up information
- Keep messages simple, accurate, repeat often
- Give same information to groups to decrease rumours
- Explain source's reliability of info you give
- Let them know when/where you will update them.

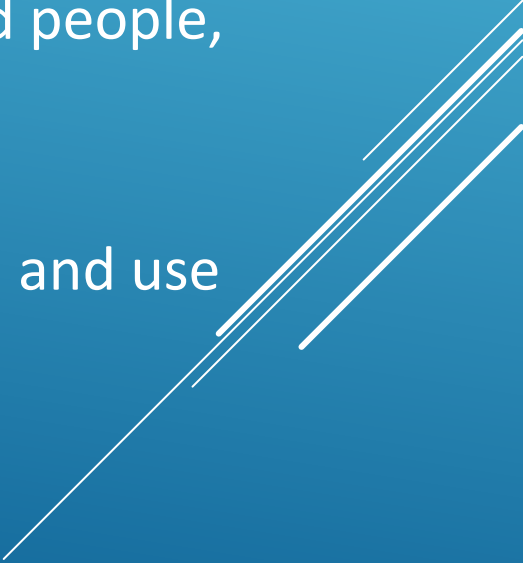


LINK – SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Social support is very important to recovery
- Keep families together and children with caregivers
- Help people contact friends and loved ones
- Give access to religious support
- Affected people may be able to help each other – bring them together
- Make sure people know about how to access services (especially vulnerable people).



THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS...

- Keep together with loved ones
 - If unaccompanied, link them with a trustworthy child protection network/agency or try to find loved ones;
 - Don't leave them unattended.
 - Keep safe
 - Protect them from gruesome scenes, injured people, destruction, upsetting stories, media.
 - Listen, talk and play
 - Be calm, talk slowly, relate on their eye level, and use language they can understand;
 - Listen to their views on the situation.
 - Remember they also have strengths
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SELF AND TEAM CARE

- It is best for helpers to be connected with an agency or group to ensure safety and good coordination
- Check in with fellow helpers to see how they are doing, and have them check in with you
- When your helping role in the crisis is over, be sure to take time for rest and reflection
- Talk about your experience with a supervisor, colleague or someone else you trust

