

Psychological First Aid Scenarios: WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...?

Let's get into the head of someone effected by their disaster experience,
to help us understand useful strategies

SCENARIOS

1. You're attempting to rescue a survivor from a trapped area with other people, and his friend begins acting loudly, demandingly.
 - **Model calmness: speak extra s-l-o-w-l-y.**
 - **Introduce yourself- "Is it OK if we talk a few minutes, ___(name)?"**
 - **Be respectful ("Sir/ Ma'am").**
 - **Be in charge, but patient, calming presence. Protect, respect, connect**
 - **Walk together; change scene: "Can we move over there, where I can understand what you're saying better?" (removing the agitation- can be 'contagious'; return when better).**
 - **Try deep breathing exercise with them.**
 - **Use active, empathetic listening. Then confirm your understanding, occasionally paraphrasing what they're expressing.. they are heard. Validate their feelings.**
 - **See if they can help you with a task: restorative**
 - **Unruly or threatening behavior is not at CERT paygrade: Report for backup, and/or EXIT!**
2. An adult has seen some traumatic things and is acting withdrawn and unresponsive, appearing stunned / numb / overwhelmed. Survivor seems to mumble the same thing over and over expressing self-blame.
 - **Introduce yourself- "Is it OK if we talk a few minutes, ___(name)?"**
 - **Invite them to speak; not badger.**
 - **"I'm here to listen." Ask: "What would help you at this time?"**
 - **Check for signs/ causes of shock**
 - **Try quick-breathing exercise with them.**
 - **"Would you come with me 'over here' / 'to the____, for some privacy/ where it's quieter/ in order to ___' Let's slowly walk over to___ for just a few minutes"**
 - **"Do you mind if I just sit with you?" Give silent companionship a chance, for connection.**
 - **Provide physical comfort, e.g., blanket, warm liquid. Offer food ('break bread' *with* them)**
 - **"Who can you/we try to contact?" (e.g., family, friend, clergy)**
 - **See if they can help you with a task: restorative. "Would you help us with ___? This is all that it will be:___; it would be so valuable!"**
 - **Report if you suspect possible self-harm**
 - **Tell them if you must go, but will check back with them (if you can). Continue giving them opportunities to open up.**

3. A child in the medical treatment area has died and you are about to tell the parent, who has been involved in helping other survivors.
 - **Prepare: Get facts right. Family/ friend, Clergy, counselor or authority figure on hand? Choose place with privacy. Have e.g., water, Kleenex, blanket, phone charger ready**
 - **“Really like you to come with me, -& sit down”. “I have some hard news”.**
 - **Use the word ‘Died’, rather than ‘passed’. Provide clear, honest information, as they are ready to hear it, as they ask.**
 - **Someone to contact for them? Talk about it? Breathing. Empathetic listening. “Cry if you want/need to.” “What would help you at this time?”**
 - **Touching appropriate?**
 - **Complete documentation.**

4. You are busy, and need to move on, but a survivor shows signs of needing psychological first aid.
 - **Preferably early on, explain that “...I will have to leave in ~ ___ mins., but will tell others that you are here...” May add that you will try to come back in ~ ___ mins./hrs.**
 - **See if someone else can be/talk with them**
 - **See if they can help you with a task**

5. A CERT member doesn’t want to stop helping but is acting very forgetful, can’t seem to concentrate, is feeling fatigued, has low energy, and has no appetite.
 - **“It’s time for a drink, & come sit by me/ sit over in this quieter space”**
 - **Support: emphatic listening.**
 - **Facilitate soothing, physically healthy actions**
 - **Rotate into less stressful task. (Ensure that their former responsibilities will be covered)**
 - **FYI to Team Lead if multiple stress symptoms, as needed**

TEAM organization concepts help us, both operationally and psychologically.

Working together; looking out for each other are important aspects of successful Teams.

- **Peer support: Got each others’ backs.**
- **Cultivate a spirit of open communication & acceptance- listening to each other. Allow all to be heard, to admit doubts/fatigue, to be treated & feel accepted as they are; Feelings of guilt, sadness, fear, etc. can be shared & processed.**