

# Psychological First Aid



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# Logistics and Housekeeping

- Location of restrooms
- Emergency exits (if appropriate)
- Cell phone/pager etiquette
- Registration/sign-in sheet
- Evaluation forms

# Learning Objectives

- At the end of this course, participants will be able to:
  - Identify the basic objectives and intervention strategies of Psychological First Aid.
  - Gain skills needed to implement the intervention strategies of Psychological First Aid.
  - Adapt Psychological First Aid in diverse settings and with different populations.
  - Appreciate the importance of providing Psychological First Aid in the aftermath of disaster.
  - Gain confidence in implementing Psychological First Aid in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.
  - Identify ways to enhance provider care before, during, and after disaster care.

# Psychological First Aid Authors

- Melissa Brymer, Ph.D., Psy.D.
- Ann Jacobs, Ph.D.
- Christopher Layne, Ph.D.
- Robert Pynoos, M.D., MPH
- Josef Ruzek, Ph.D.
- Alan Steinberg, Ph.D.
- Eric Vernberg, Ph.D., ABPP
- Patricia Watson, Ph.D.

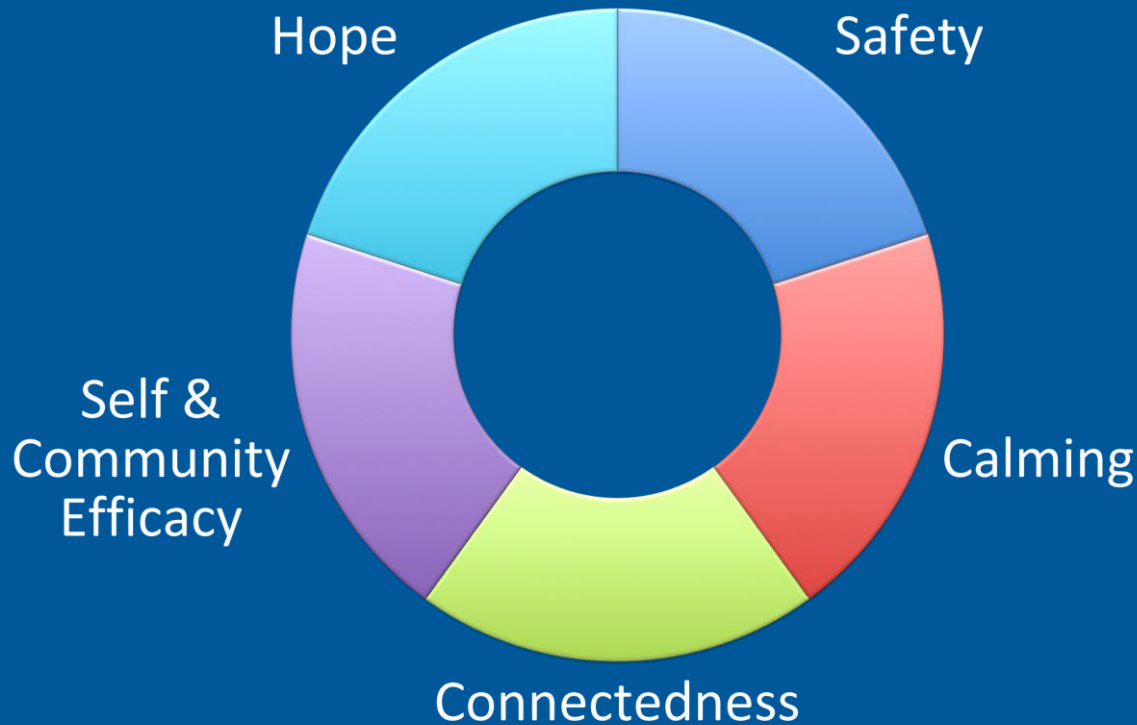
# Medical Reserve Corps Adaptation

- Abbe Finn, Ph.D.
- Jack Herrmann, M.S.Ed.
- John Hickey, Ph.D.
- Edward Kantor, M.D.
- Patricia Santucci, M.D.
- James Shultz, Ph.D.

# How Do We Know How to Respond Following Disasters?



# Five Empirically-Supported Early Intervention Principles



# What is Psychological First Aid?

- PFA is:

**An evidence-informed modular approach to assist children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of disaster and terrorism.**



# What are PFA's Principle Actions?

- PFA's principle actions are to:
  - Establish safety and security
  - Connect to restorative resources
  - Reduce stress-related reactions
  - Foster adaptive short- and long-term coping
  - Enhance natural resilience (rather than preventing long-term pathology)

# Who Delivers PFA?

- PFA is delivered by disaster response workers who provide early assistance, including:
  - First responders
  - Mental health professionals
  - School personnel
  - Religious professionals
  - Disaster volunteers
  - Health and public health officials

# Psychological First Aid Core Actions

1	Contact and Engagement
2	Safety and Comfort
3	Stabilization
4	Information Gathering
5	Practical Assistance
6	Connection with Social Supports
7	Information on Coping
8	Linkage with Collaborative Services

# Provider Care: Management

- Mandated rotation where workers are moved from the most highly exposed assignments to varied levels of exposure
- Enforced support by providing/encouraging:
  - Regular supervision
  - Regular case conferences
  - Peer partners and peer consultation

# Provider Care: Management (cont.)

- Monitor providers who meet certain high risk criteria
- Conduct trainings on stress management practices

# Provider Care: Personal

- Limit daily numbers of most severe cases
- Utilize the buddy system to share distressing emotional responses
- Use benefit time, vacation, personal time
- Access supervision routinely
- Practice stress management during the workday
- Stay aware of limitations and needs

# Provider Care: Personal (cont.)

- Providers should make every effort to avoid:
  - Working too long by themselves without checking in
  - Working “around the clock” with few breaks
  - Feeling like they are not doing enough
  - Excessive intake of sweets and caffeine

## Provider Care: Personal (cont.)

- Common attitudinal obstacles to self-care:
  - “It would be selfish to take time to rest.”
  - “Others are working around the clock, so should I.”
  - “The needs of survivors are more important than the needs of helpers.”
  - “I can contribute the most by working all the time.”
  - “Only I can do x, y, and z.”



# Provider Care: Following Disaster Response

- Expect a readjustment period upon returning home
- Discuss the situation with coworkers and management
- Participate in formal help if extreme stress persists
- Ask help in parenting, if you feel irritable or have difficulties adjusting

# Provider Care: Following Disaster Response (cont.)

- Prepare for worldview changes that may not be mirrored by others in your life
- Increase experiences that have spiritual or philosophical meaning to you
- Always remember to keep First Things First and take care of You

# Core Action #1: Contact and Engagement

- Establish a connection with survivors in a non-intrusive and compassionate manner
  - Introduce yourself and describe your role
  - Ask for permission to talk
  - Explain objectives
  - Ask about immediate needs



## Core Action #2: Safety and Comfort

- The goal is to enhance immediate and ongoing safety and provide physical and emotional comfort



## Acutely Bereaved Individuals

- Listen carefully with sympathy
- Be informed about cultural norms
- Know that grief reactions vary from person to person
- Help family members to respect differences in grieving

## Grief and Spiritual Issues

- Ask survivors if they have religious/spiritual needs
- Refer them to a clergy member of their choice
- Do not judge, contradict, or correct what they say about their religious beliefs
- If survivors want to pray, help them find a suitable place

# Core Action #3: Stabilization

- The goal is to calm and orient emotionally-overwhelmed and distraught survivors



# Signs a Person May Need Stabilization

- Glassy eyed and vacant
- Unresponsive
- Disoriented
- Exhibiting strong emotional responses
- Uncontrollable physical reactions
- Frantic searching behavior



# Grounding

- Ask the person to:
  - Listen to and look at you
  - Orient him/herself to the surroundings
  - Talk about the aspect of the situation that is under control, hopeful, or positive
  - Breathe in and out slowly and deeply
  - Name five **non-distressing** things he/she can see, hear, and feel

# Core Action #4: Information Gathering

- The goal is to identify immediate needs and concerns, gather additional information, and tailor PFA interventions
- It is used to determine:
  - Need for immediate referral
  - Need for any additional available ancillary services
  - Which components of PFA may be helpful

# Core Action #5: Practical Assistance

- Offer practical help to survivors in addressing immediate needs and concerns
  - Identify the most immediate need
  - Clarify the need
  - Discuss an action response
  - Act to address the need

# Core Action #6: Connection with Social Support

- The goal is to help establish brief or ongoing contacts with primary support persons, such as family members and friends, and to seek out other sources of support



# Core Action #7: Information on Coping

- Provide information about stress reactions and coping to reduce distress and promote adaptive functioning
  - Explain what is currently known about the event
  - Inform survivors of available resources
  - Identify the post-disaster reactions and how to manage them
  - Promote and support self-care and family care practices

# Core Action #8: Linkage with Collaborative Services

- The goal is to link survivors with available services needed immediately or in the future



## Agencies Providing Services

- Reconnect survivors to agencies that provided them services before the disaster:
  - Mental health services
  - Medical services
  - Spiritual support
  - Alternative healers
  - Child welfare services
  - Schools
  - Drug and alcohol support groups

# Discussion

- Group activities – Scenarios and Discussion



# Be well, Be safe

- First Things First
- Easy Does It
- Comfort, Care, Safety, Stabilization, Security
- Use the “buddy system”

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!