CERT Basic Training

Unit 5: Disaster Psychology







Robin McKenzie
CERT Instructor
Amateur Radio



Unit Objectives



- Understand disaster trauma for <u>survivors</u> and <u>rescuers</u>, including <u>CERT volunteers</u>
- 2. List **steps to take** for personal and team well-being
- Demonstrate key steps to apply when providing aid to someone with survivor's trauma



Definitions

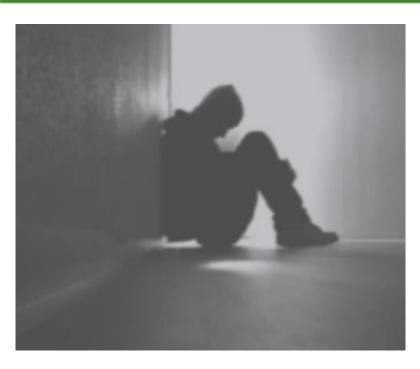


- Physiological: relating to the way in which a living organism or bodily part <u>functions</u>.
- Psychological: affecting, or arising in the mind; related to the mental and emotional state of a person.
- Trauma: a deeply <u>distressing</u> or disturbing experience.
 Physical <u>injury</u>.
- **Emergency:** <u>urgent, sudden, and serious</u> event or an unforeseen change in circumstances that necessitates immediate action to remedy harm
- Disaster: causes great damage or loss of life.



Purpose





- Recognize these reactions
- Help Team organization
- Basic level of Psychological First Aid
- This is <u>NOT</u> therapy or counseling
- Help people with locating additional support and resources

Your Ground Rules

- Safety First Situational Awareness
- Size-up
- Ask for Permission
- Uncomfortable or incapable
 - Ask For Help



Causes of Disaster Reactions



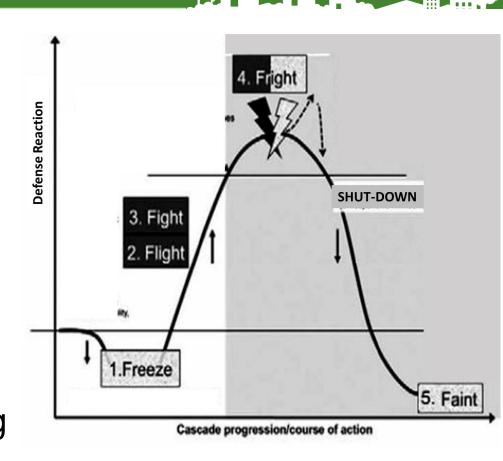
- Dealing with your own personal losses
- Working in your neighborhood
- Assisting neighbors, friends, or coworkers who have also been injured
- Feeling unsafe and insecure





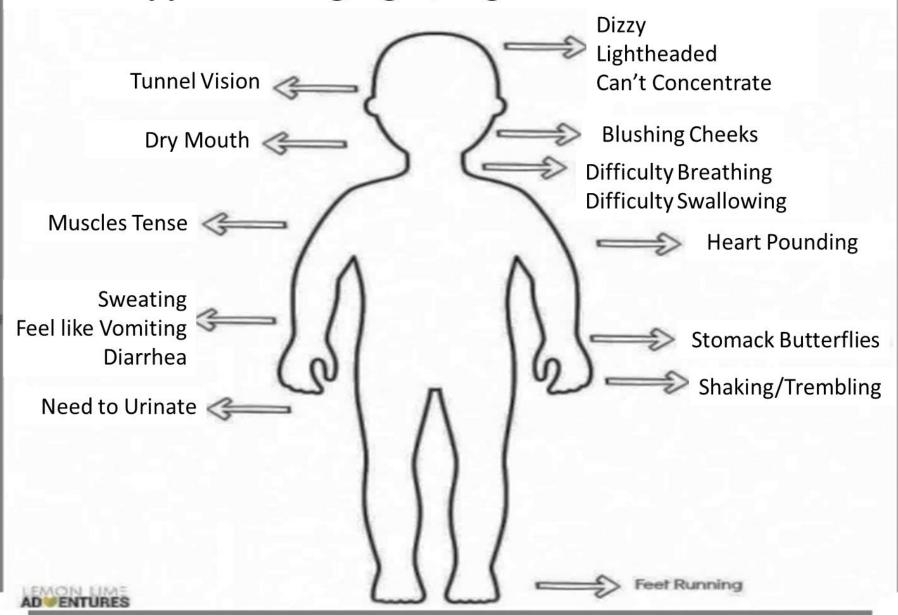
The Five Fs - a Response to Stressful Situations

- Freeze: "Stop, look, and listen," or be on guard and watchful
- Flight: Flee
- Fight: Attempt to combat the threat
- Fright: Tonic immobility when in contact with a predator, or playing dead
- Faint: Fear-induced fainting





What Happens during Fight, Flight or Freeze?



Psychological Symptoms of Trauma Psychological trauma is a response to a highly

Psychological trauma is a response to a **highly stressful event Examples**: severe illness, death, war, natural disaster, an accident.

Emotional

- Nervousness; helplessness; shock; numbness; inability to feel,
- Agitation, feeling of detachment, feeling out of control

Cognitive

- Concentration problems, difficulty making decisions;
- Reoccurrence of disturbing dreams; memory loss,
- Reduced attention span and flashbacks

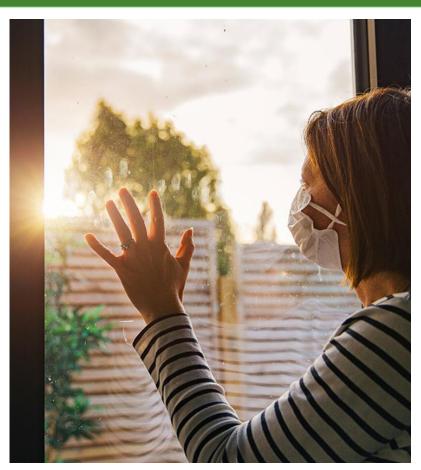
Spiritual

- Loss of hope; limited expectations about life,
- Intense use of prayer; loss of self-efficacy;
- Questioning "why me?"



Trauma during a Pandemic





Examples during COVID-19:

- Fear of infection
- The isolation of sheltering in place
- Being diagnosed with COVID-19
- Job loss or economic insecurity
- The death of a loved one
- Prolonged or extreme exposure to the trauma of others (common among first responders)



Physical Symptoms of Trauma

- Loss of appetite
- Headaches or chest pain
- Diarrhea, stomach pain, or nausea
- Hyperactivity
- Increase in drug consumption
- Nightmares
- Insomnia
- Fatigue







Self Care & Team Well-Being

- Actions can be taken before, during, and after an incident to help manage emotional impact of disaster response work
- Knowing possible psychological and physiological symptoms of disaster trauma helps manage impact
- Learn to manage stress:
 - CERT volunteers for themselves
 - CERT leaders during response



How to Reduce Stress



- Get enough sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Eat a balanced diet
- Balance work, play, and rest
- Allow yourself to receive as well as give
- Connect with others
- Use spiritual resources



Take Care of Yourself





- Be aware of trauma that can follow a disaster
- Explain to family members and friends what you need:
 - They need to Listen when you want to talk
 - Don't force yourself to talk until ready



Self-Care Toolbox



- What is likely to be your greatest challenge?
- What event may be very difficult?
 - Possibly pets, animals, children or elderly, human to human harm, contagious disease?
- What skills do you have that may come in handy in a crisis?
- How do you know that you feel stressed?
 - List symptoms and feelings.
- Make a list of things that help you relax.
- Make a list of things to avoid.
- Who are the top 5 people you can talk to when you feel stressed?



Self-Care Toolbox





https://bbvcert.org/p

Self-Care Toolbox

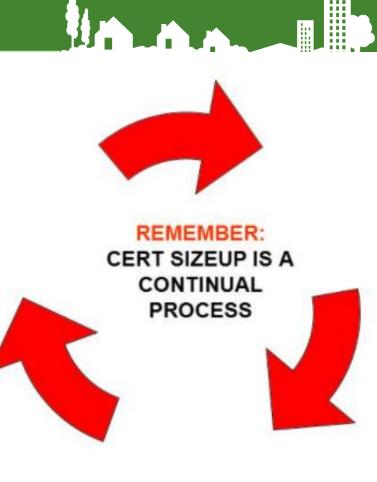
The following areas are daily things that we either do or do not do that affect our ability to respond to emergencies. Following each one, rank how well you do in that area (1 = very poor, 10 = excellent) and then write down one action you can take to improve that area by one point.

		1		-							
	Nutrition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	What can you do:		- 1	- 1				1.		1	
	Sleep	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	What can you do.										
	Manage Workload	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	What can you do:										
	Balanced Lifestyle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	What can you do:										
	Stress Management	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	What can you do:										
	I	T	T	1	1	- 1	1	T	T	Ť	
	Having fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	What can you do:					,					
	Social network	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	What can you do:	1				1.		1.	1	Ţ	
	Exercise (30 min/day)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
'	What can you do:										



Team Preparation

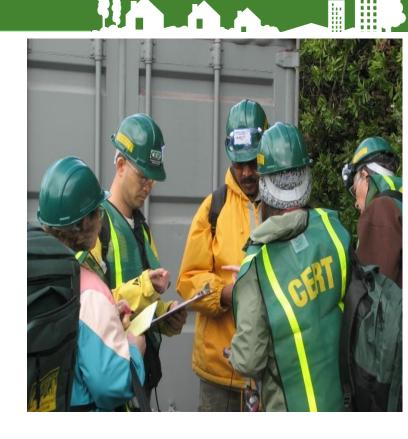
- What Happened?
- What is likely to happen next?
- Who is impacted?
- What is the CERT's Role?
- What are the available services and support?
- Any Safety and security concern?
- Take Action and Evaluate





How Team Leaders Reduce Stress

- Brief CERT personnel beforehand
- Remember CERT is a team
- Rest and regroup
- Take breaks away from the incident site
- Establish a culture of acceptance
- Eat properly, stay hydrated
- Be aware of changes in teammates
- Rotate teams and duties
- Phase out workers gradually
- Defuse after shift





Working with Survivors Emotional Response

Concern for basic survival

Confusion

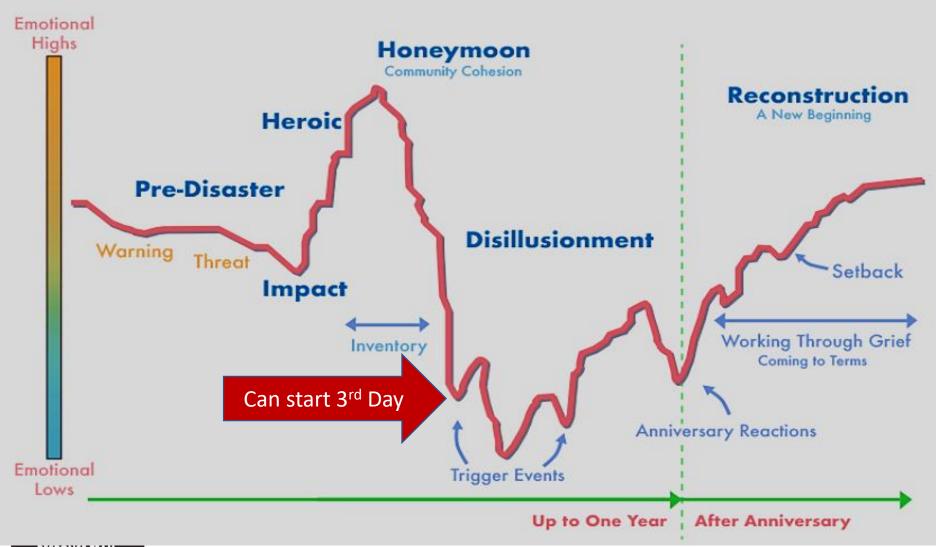
Grief over loss

Survivor guilt





Emotional Phases of a Crisis



Traumatic Crisis

- A traumatic crisis is an event experienced or witnessed in which people's ability to cope is overwhelmed by:
 - Actual or potential death or injury to self or others
 - Serious injury
 - Destruction of their homes, neighborhood, or value possessions
 - Loss of contact with family or close friends







Effects of Traumatic Stress

Cognitive functioning

- Act irrationally
- Way out of character
- Difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty sharing
- Reduced attention span
- Difficulty retrieving memories
- Preoccupation with the event
- Recurring dreams or nightmares
- Loss of hope





Effects of Traumatic Stress



Physical Health

- Increased sensory acuity
- Hyperventilation/ dizziness
- Heart palpitations
- Trembling, shaking
- · Nausea, vomiting
- Sleep difficulties
- Fatigue





Effects of Traumatic Stress

Relationships

- Increased irritability
- Anger
- Emotionality
- Isolation & avoidance
- Ineffective coping behaviors
- Self-destructive
- Hyper-vigilance
- Difficulty returning to normal activities

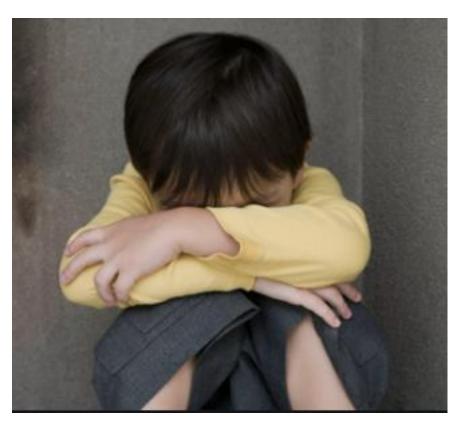




Children and Trauma



- New fears
- Separation anxiety
- Sleep issues, nightmares
- Irritable, anger
- Loss of interest
- Reduced concentration
- Decline in schoolwork
- Stomach complaints, head aches





Factors Affecting Reactions



- Prior experience with a similar event
- Intensity of disruption
- Individual feelings about event
- Emotional strength of individual
- Length of time since a previous event
- Natural or man-made disaster
- Speed of onset, duration of the disaster
- Age and experience



Stabilizing Survivors

- Assess survivors for injury or shock
- Observe their level of responsiveness
- Get uninjured people to help
- Provide support by listening and empathizing
- Help survivors connect with natural support systems





Psychological First Aid (PFA)



- ✓ Make a connection
- ✓ Help people feel safe
- ✓ Be calm and compassionate
- ✓ Meet basic needs
- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Giving realistic assurance
- ✓ Help people connect with family, friends

- ✓ Encourage good coping
- ✓ Accurate & timely information
- ✓ Repeat information as often as needed
- ✓ Refer to mental health worker when needed

Overall, People want to be heard



Listen, Protect, Connect



- Listen to survivors
 - pay attention to what they say
- Help survivors feel **Protected** by providing support
- Connect survivors to friends and loved ones





How to Be an Empathetic Listener





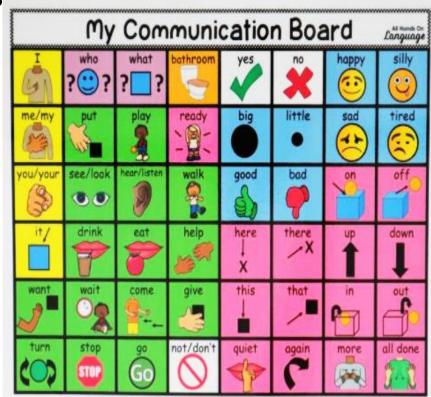
- Put yourself in the speaker's shoes
- Listen for meaning, not just words
- Pay attention to nonverbal communication
- ★Paraphrase the speaker





Basic Communication

- Speak clearly pronounce words
- Use simple words
- Be explicit to the point
- Be prepared to repeat
- Do Not increase your volume
- Be patient do not interrupt
- Eye contact mirror the person
- Uncover your mouth if possible
 - Use PPE as you need
- Listen Listen Listen





Stay Relaxed and Calm

Awareness



DO

Utilize translation resource if necessary

Express genuine empathy—universal

Respect their right to make their own decisions

Be sensitive to cultural, gender, age issues

Ask what is important in their culture, religion, etc.

Have an awareness of your own bias

DON'T

Be surprised if people react differently than what you would expect

Debate religion or cause of crisis

Judge others for their actions r

Use slang

Assume you know what they have experienced

ASK - IF YOU ARE NOT SURE



What Not to Say

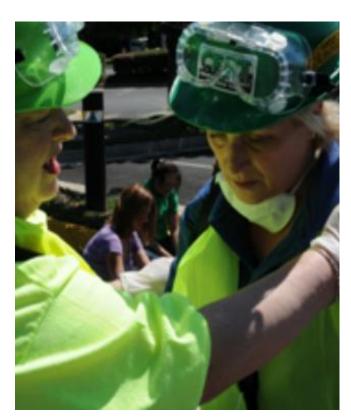
- "I understand"
- "Don't feel bad"
- "You're strong"
- "You'll get through this"
- "Don't cry"

- "It's God's will '
- "It could be worse"
- "At least you still have..."
- "Everything will be okay"



Say This Instead

- "Is it all right if I help you with...?"
- "I'm sorry for your pain "
- "I'm so sorry this has happened"
- "I can't imagine what this is like for you"
- "What do you need?"
- "What can I do for you right now?"
- "Here are somethings I can do for you"





Learn to be comfortable with silence.

Angry Reactions

- Control yourself not the person
 - -Take a deep breath
- Solve immediate practical problems
- Do not argue
- Use calm soothing voices
- Practice rational detachment
- If in danger, report it





Managing the Death Scene



- Cover the body; treat it with respect
- Follow local laws and protocols
- Talk with local authorities



Unit Summary



- Prepare yourself, as rescues may be unpleasant and uncomfortable
- Know the psychological and physiological symptoms of trauma
- Understand the six emotional phases of a disaster
- Take steps to reduce stress, which affects cognition, health, and interactions
- Stabilize individuals
- Listen, protect, and connect to support survivors
- Be an empathetic listener

