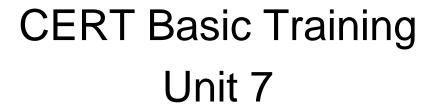


# Disaster Psychology







# Unit Objectives -

- Describe disaster and post-disaster emotional environment for survivors and rescuers
- Describe steps rescuers can take to relieve their own stress and that of other survivors





## **Unit Topics**

- ha fie
- Disaster Trauma
- Team Well-Being
- Working with Survivors' Trauma





## Psychological Trauma

- Your own personal losses
- Working in your neighborhood
- Assisting neighbors, friends, coworkers who have also been injured
- Not feeling safe and secure





## Psychological Symptoms of Trauma

- Irritability or anger
- Self-blame or blaming others
- Isolation and withdrawal
- Fear of recurrence
- Feeling stunned, numb, overwhelmed
- Feeling helpless

- Mood swings
- Sadness, depression, grief
- Denial
- Concentration and memory problems
- Relationship problems/marital discord





## Physiological Symptoms of Trauma

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





## 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 members for themselves
  - CERT leaders during response





#### **How You 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:
  - Listen when you want to talk
  - Don't force you to talk





#### **How Team Leaders Reduce Stress**

- Brief CERT personnel beforehand
- Remember CERT is a team
- Rest and regroup
- Take breaks away
- Eat properly, stay hydrated
- Arrange for debriefing
- Rotate teams and duties
- Phase out workers gradually





## Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

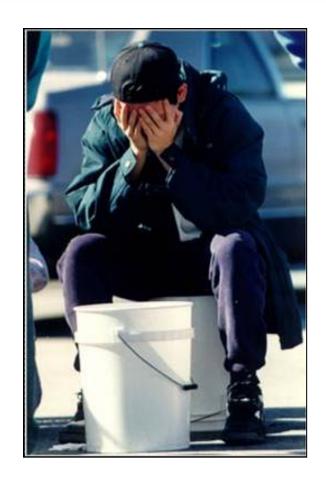
- 1. Introductions and description
- 2. Review of factual material
- 3. Sharing of initial thoughts and feelings
- 4. Sharing of emotional reactions to incident
- 5. Instruction about normal stress reactions
- 6. Review of symptoms
- 7. Closing and further needs assessment





#### Phases of a Crisis

- Impact
- Inventory
- Rescue
- Recovery







#### **Traumatic Crisis**

- Actual or potential death
- Serious injury
- Destruction
- Loss of contact with family or close friends





#### **Effects of Traumatic Stress**

- Cognitive functioning
- Physical health
- Interpersonal relationships





## **Mediating Factors**

- Prior experience with a similar event
- Intensity of disruption
- Individual feelings about event
- Emotional strength of individual
- Length of time since event





## Stabilizing Survivors

- Assess survivors for injury or shock
- Get uninjured people to help
- Provide support by:
  - Listening
  - Empathizing
- Help survivors connect with natural support systems





## 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





# Avoid Saying...

- "I understand"
- "Don't feel bad"
- "You're strong" or "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"





### Managing the Death Scene

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





## Informing Family/Friends of a Death

- Separate the family member(s) or friend(s)
- Have the person(s) sit down
- Make eye contact
- "I'm sorry, but your family member has died. I am so sorry."
- Let the family and friends grieve





# Unit Summary had been

- Rescues may be unpleasant or uncomfortable
- Psychological and physiological symptoms of trauma
- Take steps to reduce stress
- CISD is one intervention
- Four emotional phases of a disaster
- Stress affects cognition, health, and interactions
- Stabilize individuals
- Be an empathetic listener





## **Homework Assignment**

- 1. Read unit to be covered in next session
- 2. Bring necessary supplies to next session
- 3. Wear appropriate clothes to next session



