

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/index.html>



Psychological First Aid: A Minnesota Community Supported Model

An online training course from the U of MN on the concepts and applications of psychological first aid as it applies to assisting survivors and fellow responders impacted by a disaster or emergency event.

Registration Information

[U-SEEE Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Center](#)

[http://learning.umn.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?](http://learning.umn.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=1735854&selectedProgramAreaId=18870&selectedProgramStreamId=18)

[method=load&courseId=1735854&selectedProgramAreaId=18870&selectedProgramStreamId=18](http://learning.umn.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=1735854&selectedProgramAreaId=18870&selectedProgramStreamId=18)

Register with U-SEEE, scroll through the list to find this course, then follow the instructions to launch the course.

Course Overview

This course was designed as an overview for MRC volunteers, hospital personnel, disaster responders, and first-responders, to the concepts and applications of psychological first aid as it applies to assisting survivors and fellow responders impacted by a disaster or emergency event, particularly in the field during a response. This training may also be useful to other individuals when dealing with a personal crisis situation in their family, community or work place.

It will take approximately 45 minutes to complete this online training. Upon successful completion of this course learners will have the opportunity to create their own personal resiliency plans. After passing a post-test, learners will be able to print a certificate of completion granting 0.75 continuing education contact hours (0.075 CEUs).

Objectives

After completing this course, the learner will be able to:

Demonstrate knowledge of the principles and techniques of PFA as they apply to a disaster response

Identify at least seven common physical, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, spiritual, and sensory reactions to a traumatic event in adults and children;

Demonstrate knowledge of the concept footprint of disaster as a model for the impact of a disaster on people physically and emotionally over time



Psychological First Aid (PFA)

What is Psychological First Aid?

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is an evidence-informed approach that is built on the concept of human resilience. PFA aims to reduce stress symptoms and assist in a healthy recovery following a traumatic event, natural disaster, public health emergency, or even a personal crisis.

Why use PFA?

Emotional distress is not always as visible as a physical injury, but is just as painful and debilitating.

After going through a life altering experience it is common to be effected emotionally.

- Everybody who experiences a disaster is touched by it
- Reactions manifest differently at different periods of time during and after the incident.

Some common stress reactions include:

- Confusion
- Fear
- Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Sleep problems
- physical pain
- anxiety
- Anger
- Grief
- Shock
- Aggressiveness
- Withdrawal
- Guilt

- Shaken religious faith
- Loss of confidence in self or others.

While Physical First Aid is used to reduce physical discomfort due to a bodily injury, Psychological First Aid is a strategy to reduce the painful range of emotions and responses experienced by people exposed to high stress

The Goal of PFA

The goal of Psychological First Aid is to create and sustain an environment of:

- 1) Safety
- 2) Calm & Comfort
- 3) Connectedness
- 4) Self-Empowerment, and
- 5) Hope

Psychological First Aid addresses basic needs and reduces psychological distress by providing a caring comforting presence, and education on common stress reactions. It empowers the individual by supporting strengths and encouraging existing coping skills. It also provides connections to natural support networks, and referrals to professional services when needed.

Psychological First Aid is tool that each of us can use to reduce our stress level. By understanding your stress reactions and utilizing Psychological First Aid principles, you can enhance resilience in yourself, your family, workplace, and community.

What is the difference between PFA and counseling?

PFA is not traditional psychiatric or professional mental health treatment, but rather a strategy to reduce stress reactions by providing additional support to those who have been affected by a traumatic or emergency incident.

Do I need to have a special mental health degree to use PFA?

No, Psychological First Aid does not rely on direct services by mental health professionals, but rather on skills that most of us already have.

Who needs PFA?

Psychological First Aid can help everyone—children, adolescents, adults, elders, families, and communities who have been exposed to a traumatic or emergency incident, including responders and support service providers.

Is there a different PFA for children?

Psychological First Aid for children and adolescents uses the same basic core strategies of: safety; calm & comfort; connectedness; self-empowerment; and hope, but with modifications to make them developmentally and age level appropriate.

Where do you use PFA?

Psychological First Aid is designed to be simple and practical so that it can be used in any setting. Psychological First Aid can be provided anywhere that trauma survivors can be found - in shelters, schools, hospitals, private homes, the workplace, and community settings.

Is PFA administered differently amongst different cultures?

Psychological First Aid encourages the use of “Cultural Leaders” for the provision of PFA


services within various cultural groups. While the core strategies remain the same, inter-personal interaction and written communication should be adapted to respect and fit the needs of the impacted culture.

What do I do if someone needs more help than I can give?

When in doubt – consult! While most people will recover on their own from a traumatic incident, some people may need more intensive or professional support services.

If you feel that someone needs more help than you are qualified to provide, speak with your supervisor or a mental health professional on how to best assist the individual, or how to refer them to on to professional mental health services.

Where can I find more information on PFA?

 The University of Minnesota has developed a PFA phone app and mobile website

- The mobile website can be accessed at: <http://www.sph.umn.edu/ce/perl/mobile/>
- PFA phone app is available for android and iPhones at the

Additional PFA resources are available on-line at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/oep/responsesystems/behavioral.html>

For further information, contact:



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Catecholamine

- Excites the system
- Triggers increased nervous system
- "Flight or fight" response

Cortico-steroids

- Moderates and controls extremes of catecholamine
- Keep 'flight or fight' in check

Endogenous Opioids

- Creates heightened threshold of pain
 - Causes dissociative reactions
 - Causes blunting of emotions
 - with catecholamines, causes amnesiac reactions
 - Causes feelings of euphoria
-

Physiological reactions to stress

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1. **The adrenal gland downloads two stimulants (epinephrine-nor-epinephrine)**
Carb's kick in the pituitary to produce ACTH (CORTIZONE).
 - a. Reduces the severity of tissue responses, calms body tissue and prevents a major allergic reaction.
 - b. Destroys the body's resistance, and the immune response weakens.
2. **Thyroid kicks in to regulate the speed of chemical reactions**
 - a. Thyroid speeds up the body's metabolism, burns fuel faster, provides extra energy.
 - b. exhaustion and burnout - shaky nerves - jumpiness, weight loss, insomnia,
3. **Endorphins - Pain killer.**
 - a. The natural morphine painkiller.
 - b. Depletes normal levels of endorphin, and little hurts become big.
4. **Hormone females (progesterone) and males (testosterone) diminishes.**
 - a. Body focuses on survival, not reproduction.
 - b. Ovulation changes, disruption of menstrual cycles, testosterone levels are lowered.
5. **The digestive system shuts down.**
 - a. Critical blood supplies are diverted to the engine room of the heart and lungs.
 - b. Dry mouth, hard to get system started again.
6. **Release of sugar into the blood, and increased insulin levels to break up sugars.**
 - a. Body's short distance energy,
 - b. Tough on diabetics.
7. **The liver sends cholesterol into the bloodstream**
 - a. Cholesterol is the long distance" fuel since the stomach factory shut down.
 - b. Coronary arteries load up. A clogged freeway causes heart attacks.
8. **Racing heart**
 - a. The heart muscle pumps blood to the lungs and the muscle tissues to carry fuel and oxygen to the war zones.
 - b. Blood pressure escalates.
9. **The body demands, "more air", and the nose, throat, and lungs dilate while the breathing becomes deep and rapid.**
 - a. The increased capacity of oxygen feeds the increased blood supply coming into the lungs.
 - b. Breathing anything dangerous, smoke or fumes, the chemicals will stick to your tiny cells in throat and lung tissue.
10. **The blood thickens with red and white blood cells.**
 - a. More thick blood cells into your circulatory system to expand your capacity.
 - b. Can cause a blood clot, a stroke, or an aneurysm.
11. **The skin pales, sweats, "crawls", and the stiff hairs heighten our sense of touch.**
 - a.: The hypersensitivity of the skin detects minute environmental dangers.
 - b. Pasty face; clammy cold hands and stained armpits.
12. **The senses become super sensitive and acute**
 - a.: This super sensing brings the body to peak function, Eyes, Ears, Touch, Taste. Smell
 - b. High error rate.

KEYS TO STRESS MANAGEMENT

DIET: Mind what you eat. Focus on high protein foods, raw fruits and vegetables, nuts, things like that.. Use low sugar, low fat and low salt for a time. Stay away from carbohydrates. Cortisone levels rise when stressed, which causes our immune system to deplete and our brains tell our body that it is starving to death.

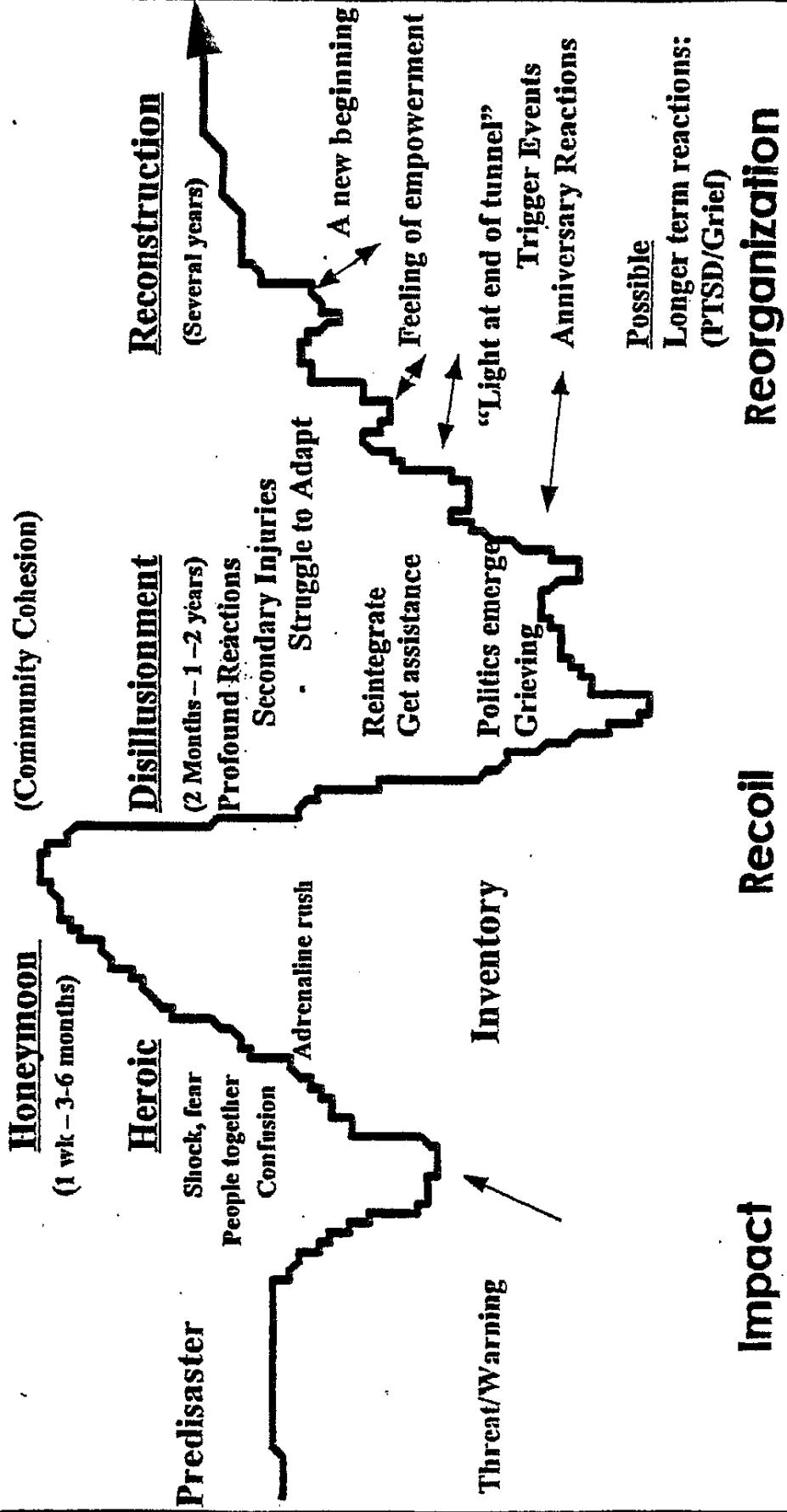
EXERCISE: Sweat out the 132 chemicals that mix together when your body went into the stress response. Sweat is the only way to remove chemicals quickly. Get physical therapy massages to ease the pains on the body.

LET IT RUN: Your unconscious has to find a fit for the event in your memory that your memory can accept. It will run it at your request, or when it feels it can. You control when it runs. If it is overwhelming now, set it up to "run of Friday."

BREATHING TECHNIQUES: Roll your shoulders back. Breathe in to the count of four; breathe out to the count of six. INHALE OXYGEN, EXHALE CARBON DIOXIDE. Most people use 1/3rd of their lung capacity, and have Carbon Dioxide trapped in their lungs. Deep breathing, using more than 2/3rds of your lung capacity, will decrease Carbon dioxide levels, and increase oxygen flow to the brain and the body. We think clearer, and breathe slower. Deep breathing also increases the Serotonin levels in our body, making us feel better.

COMPASSION FATIGUE: The cost of caring. Take care of yourself.

Phases of Disaster or Crisis



1 to 3 days

Time line

2 to 5++ years* (varies with victims)