

Key Components of Psychological First Aid (PFA):

Providing PFA means reaching out to people exposed to disasters and trauma. PFA helps meet basic needs.

Stress: Is a normal reaction in normal people to an abnormal event.

Resilience: The positive capacity of people to cope with stress and adversity

- **Do no harm**
- **Assume competence & resilience**
- **Everyone who experiences a disaster is affected by it**
- **Simple human presence is powerful & reassuring – Silence is ok**
- **Respect individual differences in moving through traumatic reactions**
- **Focus on strengths, resources and potential**

1

Communications Basics

| DO | |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| ✓ | Listen |
| ✓ | Offer respect |
| ✓ | Be prepared |
| ✓ | Speak calmly |
| ✓ | Point out strengths |
| ✓ | Deal with immediate needs |
| ✓ | Share helpful information |

| DON'T | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| X | Be a mind reader |
| X | Assume trauma |
| X | Talk down to a survivor |
| X | Assume they need you |
| X | Spread rumors |
| X | Say everything will be ok |
| X | Make promises that cannot be kept |

3

Understanding and Responding

Empathetic Leads

- ❖ So you feel....
- ❖ I hear you saying...
- ❖ I sense that you are feeling...
- ❖ You appear...
- ❖ It seems you...
- ❖ You place a high value on...

Helpful Response Leads

- ❖ So...I am listening.
- ❖ Tell me more about that.
- ❖ Sounds like talking about that is hard for you.
- ❖ Sometimes talking about it helps.
- ❖ Sounds like you are angry about that.

Finding resiliency

- ❖ How did you get yourself to do that?
- ❖ What inner strengths do you draw upon?
- ❖ How did you manage that?
- ❖ What has surprised you about yourself?

5

Self-Care

- Your safety comes first
- Get enough sleep and exercise
- Focus on your strengths and positive coping skills
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Remember to have a plan for your family
- Use the buddy system
- Remember to take breaks, drink water, eat, use the facilities!
- We are useless to others if we are not okay ourselves

7

Active Listening

- Paraphrase
- Reflect feelings
- Allow expression of emotion
- Use nonverbal cues
- Allow for silence, if appropriate

Listening Tips

- Allow people to tell their story and listen
- Observe their breathing – help them begin slow deep breathing
- Note their body language and eye contact
- Do not interrupt/intrude
- Allow one to vent without trying to defend or bash

Remember to pay careful attention.

Watch-Look-Listen

4

Resources

In the case of a dangerous or life threatening emergency, always call **911** immediately

**Montgomery County Crisis Center 24/7 Hotline:
240-777-4000**

Suicide Hotline: 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

**Montgomery County Emergency Health
Services (DHHS)**

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs/>

8

Key Components of Psychological First Aid (PFA):

Protect:

- Contact and engage
 - Establish a connection in a non-intrusive compassionate manner
- Safety and Comfort
 - Enhance immediate and ongoing safety, and promote physical and emotional comfort
 - Basic needs – water, food, restrooms, shelter, medications
 - Stabilization

Direct

- Information Gathering
 - Offer practical assistance and information to address survivor's immediate needs and concern

Connect

- Connection with social supports
- Information on coping
- Help them regain control, make decisions
- Provide information about stress and coping to reduce distress and promote adaptive functioning
- Linkage with collaborative services

2

When to Refer/Request Assistance

- When a person asks to speak to a mental health professional
- The problem is beyond your training or comfort level
- A person hints or talks openly about death or suicide
- There is an indication of abuse or on-site criminal activity
- The person seems socially isolated
- The person has hallucinations, feelings of persecution or extreme anxiety
- You have difficulty maintaining real contact with the person
- You become aware of active use of alcohol or drugs
- The person is engaging in risky or threatening behavior

REFER TO YOUR SUPERVISOR

6