

A 1-day orientation in psychological first aid (PFA) for first responders

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Very quick introductions (plenum)

What is your

- Name?
- Job title?
- Affiliation?



what does she need?



OVERVIEW

1. ON DISASTERS AND INDIVIDUAL'S EMERGENCIES
2. FRAMEWORK
3. STARTING WITH OURSELVES: STAFF CARE
4. PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID



1. ON DISASTERS AND INDIVIDUAL'S EMERGENCIES



On disasters (emergency events affecting a lot of people at the same time)

Disasters can occur because of floods, storms, plane crashes, conflict/war, forced displacement, earthquakes, famine, industrial disasters etc

- What type of disasters have you encountered in the areas where you live and work?
- What were the mental health and psychosocial needs?
- What were the resources?
- What was done?

On disasters

Disasters can occur because of floods, storms, plane crashes, conflict/war, forced displacement, earthquakes, famine, industrial disasters etc

- What type of disasters would you like to prepare for?

On individual's emergency events

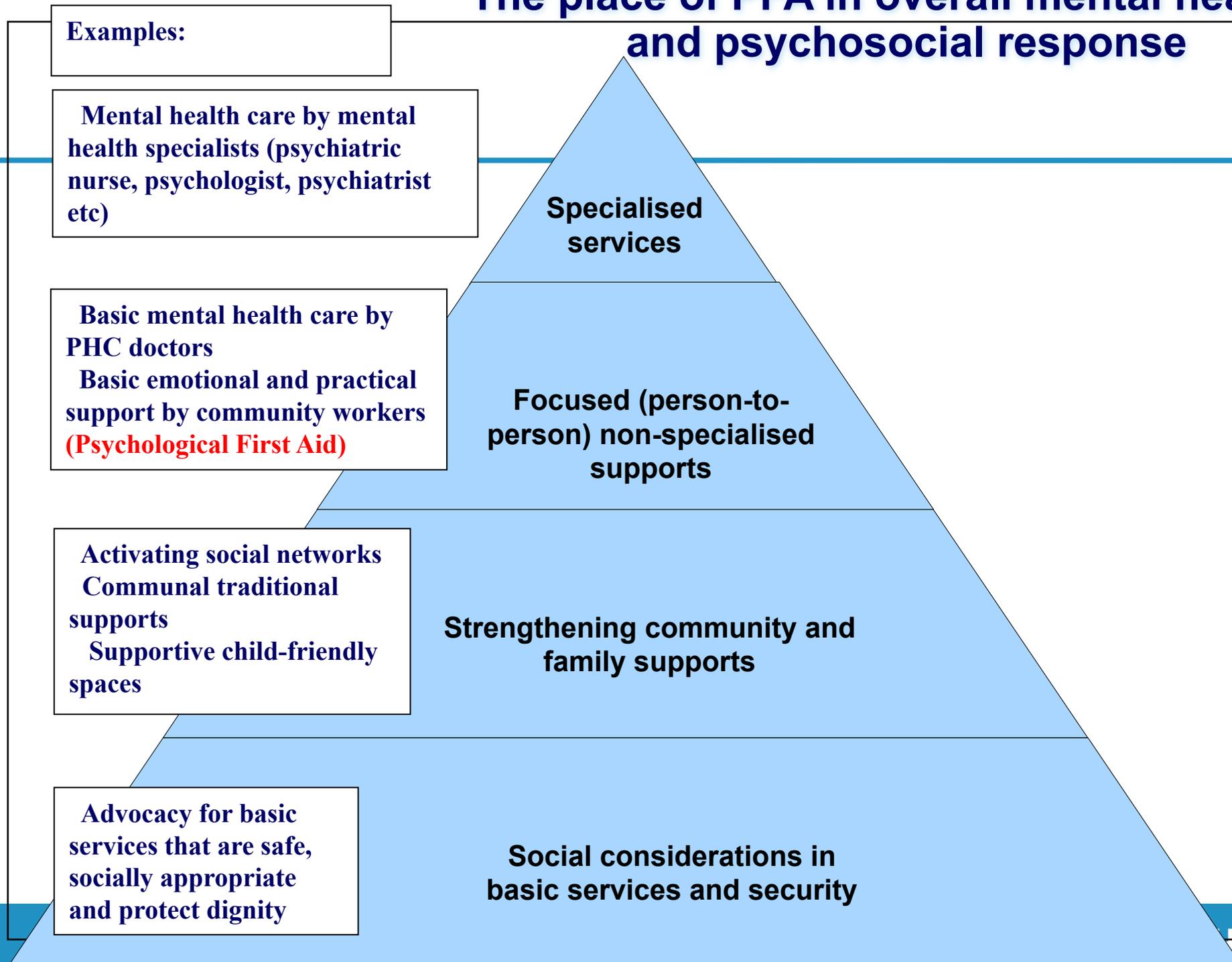
Individual's emergency events include: car accidents, rape, sudden death of a family member, robberies, etc

- What kind of individual's emergency events do you encounter in your line of work?
- What kind of problems do people have encountering these sort of events?
 - Physical aspects?
 - Mental aspects?
 - Social aspects?

3. FRAMEWORK



The place of PFA in overall mental health and psychosocial response



3. STARTING WITH OURSELVES: STAFF CARE



Staff well-being

Key determinants of staff well-being

- Pre-emergency staff mental health/well-being
- Work-related stressors (Supervision and management, security, work load/hours, witnessing suffering etc)
- Adversity (eg trauma exposure) on the job
- Support after adversity

Please reflect on these questions and share with everybody (plenum exercise)

- What do you do for yourself to care for yourself when you are very upset? (all participants to answer this question)
- What do you do for your family members or colleagues when they are very upset? (a few participants to answer this question)



4. PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID



What comes to mind when you hear...

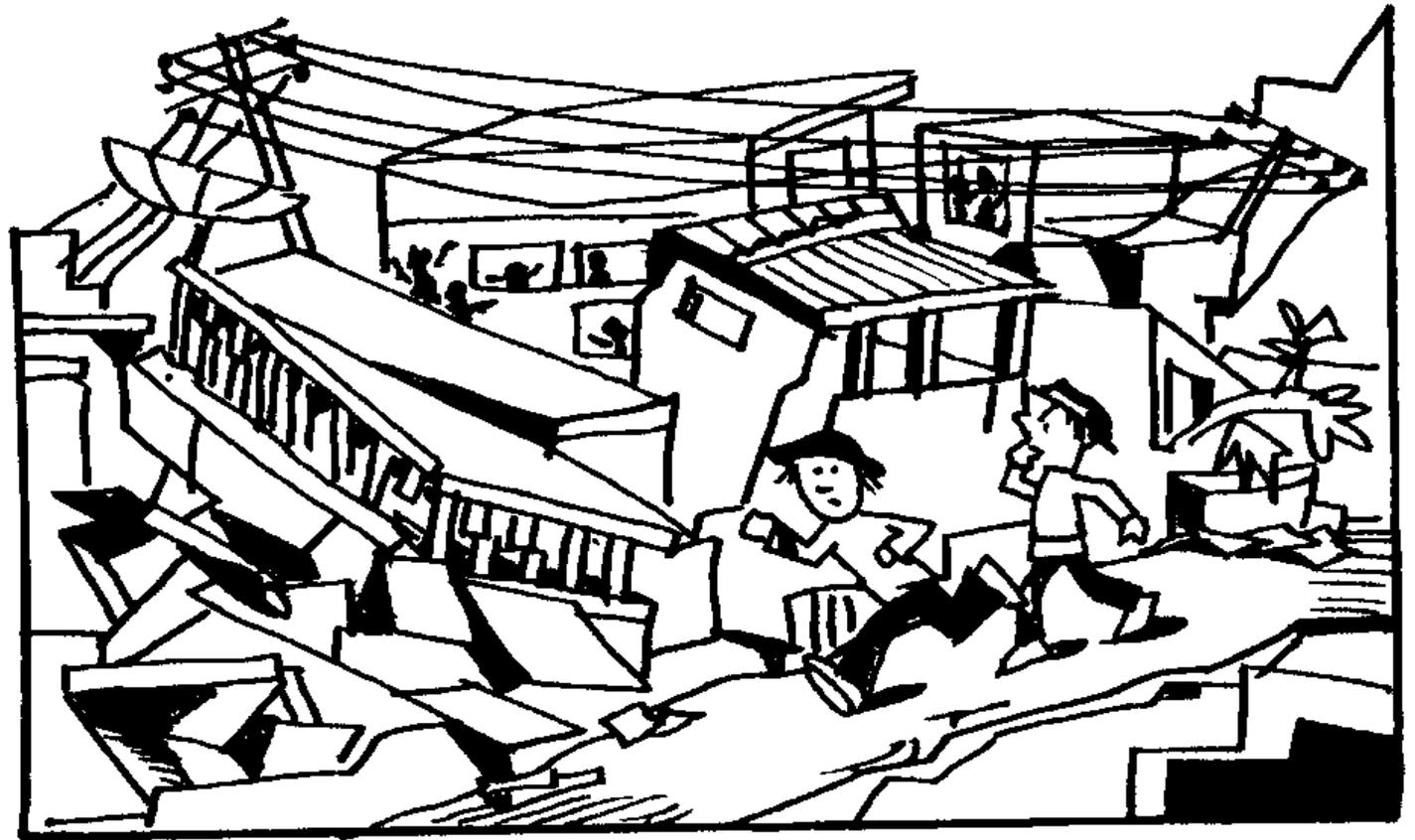
“First Aid”



**What comes to mind when you
hear...**

“Psychological First Aid”?

PFA Simulation (make 2 groups and prepare for a 10 minutes role play)



PFA simulation: the affected people

- Half the room is asked to leave the room and read the following:

A few hours ago a large flood has suddenly hit the centre of the city in the middle of the work day. You are members of the population and have been affected and buildings have fallen. You have been severely affected.

Please take on a role. A few of you will play you are unconscious, others will play as children who cannot find their parents, mothers whose children have died, a few of you are quite, one of you is mute, one if you is screaming, some of you are dead, one of you is elderly, two of you are just fine and talkative

Please decide now what role you will play and share this with everybody in your group

Please prepare yourself (position in the room etc) (5 min)

Please behave as serious as possible (try not to laugh during simulation)



PFA Simulation: the helpers

- Half the room is asked to leave the room and read the following:

You hear that a large flood has suddenly hit the centre of the city in the middle of the work day. Many people have been affected and buildings have fallen by the force of the waves. The extent of the damage is unclear. You and your colleagues go to assist survivors, and to support any severely affected people you encounter

Please take on a role. A few of you will play you are medics, others will play as police, a few as fire-fighters, a few as Red Cross volunteers, a few of you are young men who are keen to help, a few of you are teachers

Please decide now what role you will play and share this with everybody in your group

Please prepare yourself as a group (5 minutes)

Please behave as serious as possible (try not to laugh during simulation)

PFA simulation

- Ask helpers
 - How was the experience for you?
 - What went well?
 - What could have gone better?



PFA simulation

- Ask affected population
 - How was the experience for you?
 - What went well?
 - What could have gone better?



Psychological First Aid (PFA) is:

A description of a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support. PFA involves the following themes:

- Providing practical care and support that does not intrude
- Assessing needs and concerns
- Helping people to access basic needs (e.g. food and water, information)
- Comforting people and helping them to feel calm
- Helping people connect to information, services and social supports
- Protecting people from further harm

PFA is not....

- It is NOT something only professionals can do
- It is NOT professional counseling
- It is NOT psychological debriefing
- It is NOT asking someone to analyze what happened to them or to put time and events in order
- It is NOT pressing people to tell you their story
- It is NOT asking people details about how they feel or what happened



Who? When? Where?

Discuss in small groups:

- **Group 1** – Following a crisis event, WHO might need PFA?
- **Group 2** – Following a crisis event, WHO might need more support than PFA only?
- **Group 3** – Following a crisis event, WHEN should PFA be provided to others?
- **Group 4** – Following a crisis event, WHERE should PFA be provided?

5 Minutes!



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Who is PFA for?

- PFA is for very distressed people who have been recently exposed to an extremely distressing event.
- It can be provided to children and adults
- Not everyone who experiences a crisis event will need or want PFA. Do not force help on people who do not want it
- PFA is not necessarily for everybody



Who needs more support than PFA only?

- People with serious life-threatening injuries
- People so upset they cannot care for themselves or their children
- People who may hurt themselves or endanger the lives of others

When? and Where?

- When?

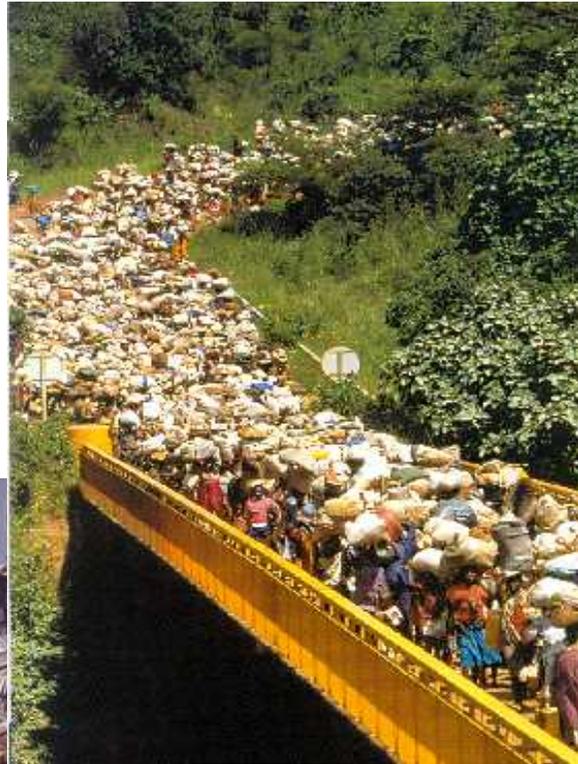
- Upon first contact with very distressed people, usually immediately following an event, or sometimes a few days/weeks after.

- Where?

- Wherever is safe enough for you to be there.
- Ideally with some privacy, as appropriate to preserve confidentiality and dignity



If this crisis happened...



- What would you need as a SURVIVOR?

Frequent Needs of People After Crisis Event

- Access to basic needs: water, food, shelter, sanitation
- Access to health services for injuries, acute disease or continuation of medications for chronic disease
- Access to understandable and correct information about event, loved ones and available services
- Being able to contact loved ones
- Being consulted and involved in important decisions
- Access to specific support related to one's culture or religion

What do helpers need to prepare before entering a situation? **Seek to learn about...**

The Crisis Event	<p>What happened?</p> <p>Where?</p> <p>When?</p> <p>How many and who are affected? Who is coordinating?</p>
Available Services	<p>Who is providing for basic needs (emergency medical care, food, shelter)?</p> <p>When & where can people access services?</p> <p>Who is helping, including community members?</p>
Safety & Security	<p>Is the crisis over or ongoing (aftershocks, fighting)?</p> <p>What dangers may be in the environment?</p> <p>Are there places to avoid due to insecurity or because it is not permitted to be there?</p>

The Action Principles of PFA

Principle	Actions
LOOK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check for safety.• Check for people with obvious urgent basic needs.• Check for people with serious distress reactions.
LISTEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approach people who may need support.• Ask about people's needs and concerns.• Listen to people, and help them to feel calm.
LINK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help people address basic needs and access services.• Help people cope with problems.• Give information.• Connect people with loved ones and social support.



The Action Principles of PFA

LOOK

- **Check for safety.**
- Check for people with obvious urgent basic needs.
- Check for people with serious distress reactions.



Check for Safety:

- What dangers can you observe – e.g. Active conflict, damaged roads, unstable buildings, fire, flooding
- Ask if you can be there safely without harming yourself or others
- If you are not certain about the safety of the crisis site, then Do Not Go in order to give PFA.

The Action Principles of PFA

LOOK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check for safety.• Check for people with obvious urgent basic needs.• Check for people with serious distress reactions.
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Check for people with obvious urgent basic needs:

- Does anyone need emergency medical help? Do people need rescuing (e.g. trapped)?
- Do people need urgent protection (e.g. clothing or shelter)?
- Are there any special groups that clearly need protection & assistance?
- Is anyone else available to help with meeting physical needs?
- **Know your role and try to obtain help for people who need special assistance or who have obvious urgent basic needs.**

The Action Principles of PFA

LOOK

- Check for safety.
- Check for people with obvious urgent basic needs.
- **Check for people with serious distress reactions.**



Check people with serious distress reactions:

- Are there people extremely upset, immobile, not responding to others, or in shock?
- Where and who are the most distressed people?

Examples of distress responses (the ones in red are less common but especially of concern)

- Physical symptoms (e.g. Shaking, headaches, fatigue, loss of appetite, aches & pains)
- Crying, sadness, depressed mood, grief, anxiety, fear, Irritability, anger, guilt, shame
- Being “on guard” or “jumpy”, being afraid that something really bad is going to happen
- Insomnia, nightmares
- Confused, emotionally numb, or feeling unreal or in a daze
- Being immobile or withdrawn, not responding to others, not speaking at all
- Disorientation (not knowing one’s name, where they are from or what is happening)
- Not being able to care for oneself or one’s children

Examples of distress responses

- Most people recover well over time, especially if they can restore their basic needs and receive support such as PFA
- However, those with severe or long-lasting distress may require more support.
- When many people are distressed, try to help the most distressed first
- If a person is responding severely, try not to leave them alone; try to keep him or her safe until the reaction passes or until you can find help from others.

The Action Principles of PFA

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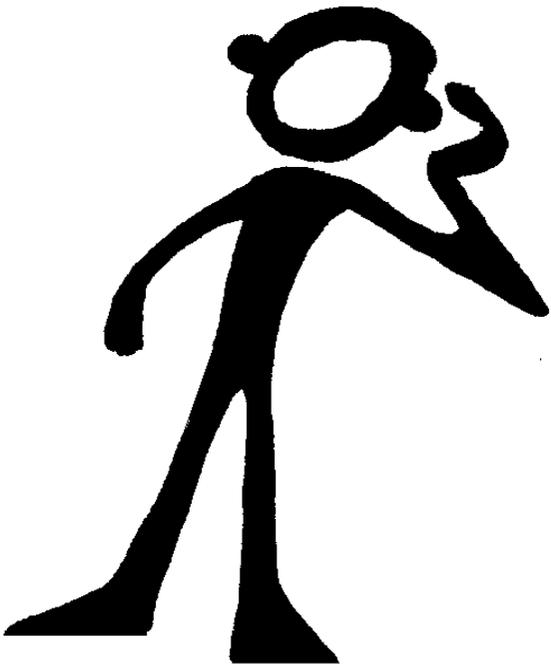


The Action Principles of PFA

LISTEN

- Approach people who may need support.
- Ask about people's needs and concerns.
- Listen to people and help them to feel calm.

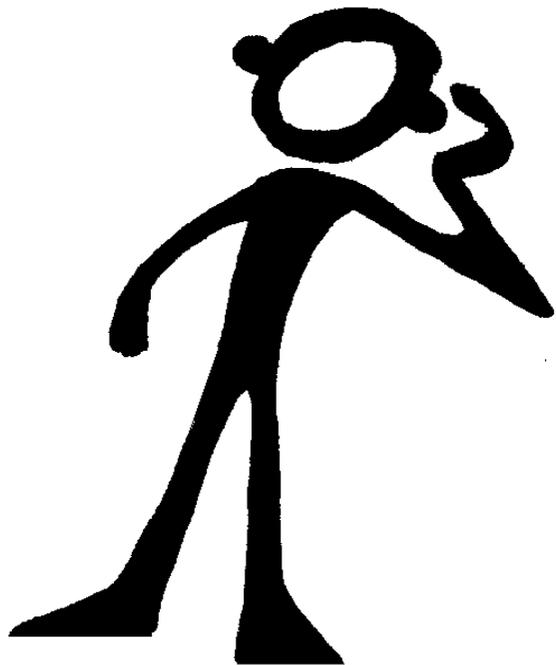
- Approach people respectfully and according to culture
- Introduce yourself by name & organisation, ask if you can provide help
- If possible, find a quiet & safe place to talk
- Help the person feel comfortable, offer water or food if you can
- Try to keep the person safe
- If the person is very distressed, try to make sure they are not alone



The Action Principles of PFA

LISTEN

- Approach people who may need support.
- **Ask about people's needs and concerns.**
- Listen to people and help them to feel calm.



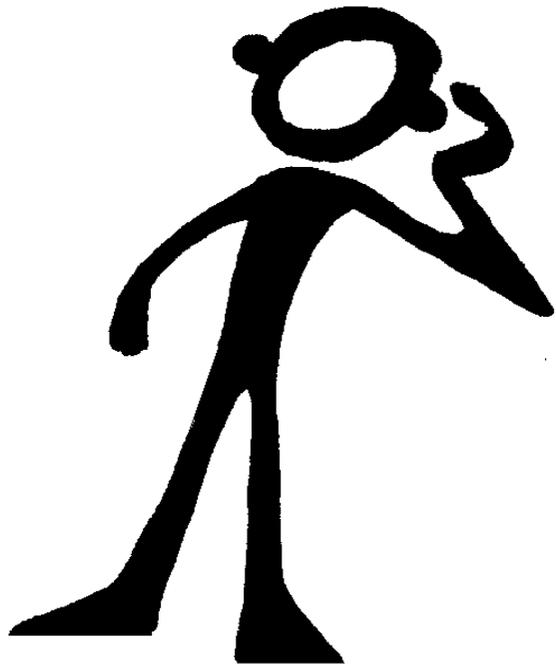
Ask about the people's needs and concerns:

- Address any obvious needs – e.g. If a person's clothing is torn or they need a blanket
- Always ask for people's needs and concerns
- Find out what is most important to them at this moment
- Help them to work out what their priorities are

The Action Principles of PFA

LISTEN

- Approach people who may need support.
- Ask about people's needs and concerns.
- **Listen to people and help them to feel calm.**



Listen to people and help them to feel calm:

- Stay close to the person
- Do not pressure the person to talk
- Listen in case they want to talk about what happened
- If they are very distressed help them to feel calm and try to make sure they are not alone

Good Communication – Things NOT to say and do

- Don't pressure someone to tell their story.
- Don't interrupt or rush someone's story (e.g., don't look at your watch or speak too rapidly).
- Don't touch the person if you're not sure it is appropriate to do so.
- Don't judge what they have or haven't done, or how they are feeling. *Don't say: "You shouldn't feel that way," or "You should feel lucky you survived."*
- Don't make up things you don't know.
- Don't use too technical terms.
- Don't talk about your own troubles.
- Don't give false promises or false reassurances.
- Don't think and act as if you must solve all the person's problems for them.
- Don't take away the person's strength and sense of being able to care for themselves.
- Don't talk about people in negative terms (e.g., "crazy" or "mad").

Helping people feel calm

- Keep your voice calm and use a soft tone
- If culturally appropriate, try to maintain some eye contact with the person as you talk to them
- If they are safe, reassure the person they are safe and that you are there to help them

If someone feels disconnected from their surroundings, you can help them by:

- Getting them to place their feet on the floor
- Tap their fingers or hands on their lap
- Notice some non-distressing things in the environment, like what they see, hear or feel

If someone is breathing fast (because of anxiety) Encourage the person to focus on their breath, and to breathe slowly

The Action Principles of PFA

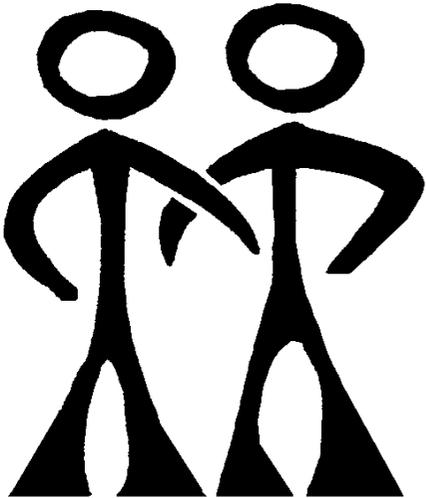
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The Action Principles of PFA

LINK

- **Help people address basic needs and access services.**
- Help people cope with problems.
- Give information.
- Connect people with loved ones and social support.



Help people address basic needs & access services:

- E.g. water, food, shelter
- Learn what specific needs people have and try to link them to available assistance (e.g. Health care)
- Make sure vulnerable groups are looked after
- Follow up with people if you promise to do so

The Action Principles of PFA

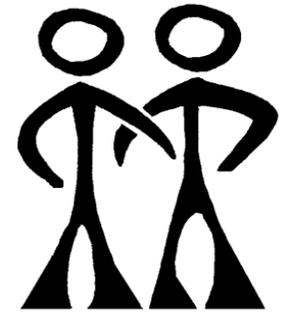
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- Help people identify their most urgent practical needs, how to prioritise them and how to address them
- Help the person identify supports in their life
- Give practical suggestions for people to meet their own needs (e.g. How to register for food aid)
- Ask the person how they coped with difficult situations in the past
- Affirm their ability to cope in the present situation
- Ask the person what usually helps them to feel better
- Affirm positive coping strategies and discourage negative coping strategies



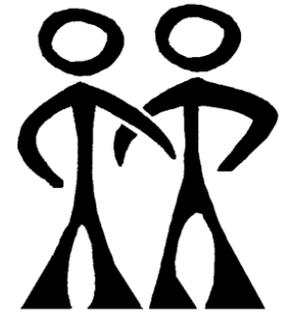
Positive Coping Strategies

- Getting some rest
- Spending time with family & friends
- Discussing problems with someone you trust
- Doing activities that help you relax – e.g. Walking, singing, praying, playing with children)
- Engaging in physical exercise
- Finding safe ways to help others



Negative Coping Strategies

- Avoid heavy alcohol use
- Don't sleep all day
- Don't work all the time without any rest
- Don't isolate yourself from friends and loved ones
- Don't be violent



The Action Principles of PFA

LINK

- Help people address basic needs and access services.
- Help people cope with problems.
- **Give information.**
- Connect people with loved ones and social support.

- Find out where to get information and where to get updates
- Try to get as much information as you can before approaching people with support
- Keep updated with the crisis information
- Provide people with contact details or direct referral to services for those in need
- Only say what you know
- Keep information messages simple and accurate

The Action Principles of PFA

LINK

- Help people address basic needs and access services.
- Help people cope with problems.
- Give information.
- **Connect people with loved ones and social support.**

- Keep families together and children with their parents
- Help people to contact friends or relatives – e.g. You might provide them with a way to call a loved one
- If a person indicates prayer or religious practice is important, they may benefit from being linked with their spiritual base
- Bring affected people together to help each other
- Ensure the person can identify at least one other person they can go to once your assistance has ended



Ending your assistance:

- Say goodbye in a positive way, such as by wishing them well
- Explain to the person you are leaving and who they can connect with for support afterwards. This may be someone you have identified or [preferably] someone they have identified
- Do not leave people who cannot take of themselves alone!

Exercise in adapting the Action Principles of PFA to local culture

Group 1: Look. In this culture, how do people react, behave or respond when they are distressed? What might you be able to do to assist people with these symptoms of distress?

Group 2: Listen. In this culture, what do people do to show they are listening? In this culture, are there ways you use to help people feel calm?

Group 3: Link. In this culture, who are the people that individuals connect with for emotional support? How do they approach others to get that support? How do they know they are being supported?

- Either plenum or small group discussion



Review

- What have you learned so far?
- What confuses you?
- Do you disagree with anything?
- Do you feel you confident about being able to do PFA?



PFA Group role play scenario

- You are a teacher travelling on a busy village road when up ahead you see that there was an accident and a lot of people gathered at the place of the accident. It appears a woman who was crossing the road was hit by a passing car. An ambulance has come and taken her to the hospital. The husband is left behind. He is shaking.

Some villagers are gathering on the road near the scene of the accident. There is a lot of fast traffic . The hospital is 40 kms away



PFA simulation

- Ask helpers
 - How was the experience for you?
 - What went well?
 - What could have gone better?

Checklist for evaluating the group role play. Did you do all of the following?

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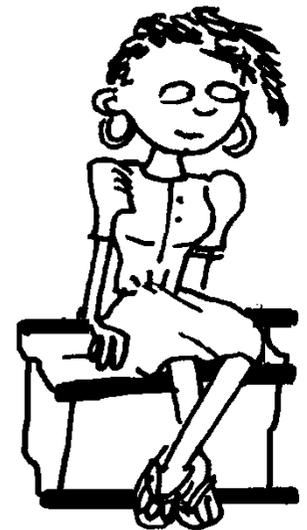
In most situations, the following people are at special risk

- Children and adolescents,
- People with health conditions or physical and mental disabilities,
- People at risk of discrimination or violence.



People who likely need special attention: Children & Adolescents

- At increased risk of sexual violence, abuse and exploitation
- How children & adolescents react to a crisis depends on their age and developmental stage, the ways caregivers and other adults interact with them
- It is common for children to regress in developmental stages after a crisis
- Unaccompanied children need to be reunited with family as quickly as possible
- Parents can be supported to help their own children



People who likely need special attention: People with health conditions or disabilities

- Disability may be physical or mental.
- Includes the elderly
- Crises may worsen certain health conditions or mental disorders
- Help them get to a safe place
- Help them to access and utilise basic needs
- Ask about any medications that may need to be resupplied
- Stay with them to ensure their safety or until longer-term assistance can be arranged
- Give them information about services



People who likely need special attention: People at risk of discrimination or violence

- Who are at risk of discrimination or violence here?
- Women often at higher risk of being victim of violence
- They may be left out of distributions of basic needs or services, decisions about aid or shelter, and may be targeted for violence, including sexual violence
- People at risk may need special protection to be safe
- Help them find a safe place to stay
- Connect them with their loved ones and other trusted people
- Provide them with information on basic needs & services



PFA Ethical Guidelines

Don'ts

- Don't exploit your relationship as a helper
- Don't ask the person for any money or favor for helping them
- Don't make false promises or give false information
- Don't exaggerate your skills
- Don't force help on people, and don't be intrusive or pushy
- Don't pressure people to tell you their story
- Don't share the person's story with others
- Don't judge the person for their actions or feelings

PFA simulation: the affected people

- Half the room is asked to leave the room and read the following:

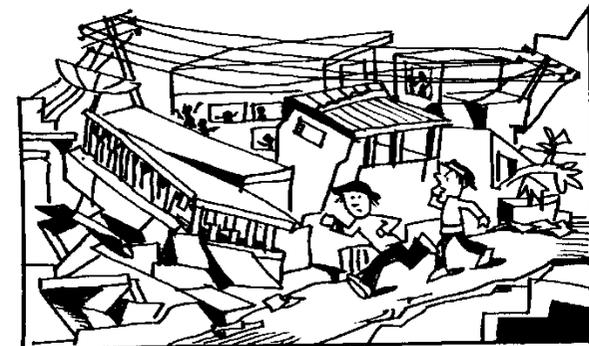
6 hours ago a large flood has suddenly hit the centre of the city in the middle of the work day. You are members of the population and have been affected and buildings have fallen. You have been rescued and you have been moved to a shelter. A group of first responders comes to try to help you

Please take on a role. A few of you will play you are fine, others will play as children who cannot find their parents, mothers whose children have died, a few of you are quite, one of you is mute, two if you are screaming, one has lost all his properties, some are angry, some worried, some bereaved

Please decide now what role you will play and share this with everybody in your group

Please prepare yourself (position in the room etc) (5 min)

Please behave as serious as possible (try not to laugh during simulation)



PFA Simulation: the helpers

- Half the room is asked to leave the room and read the following:

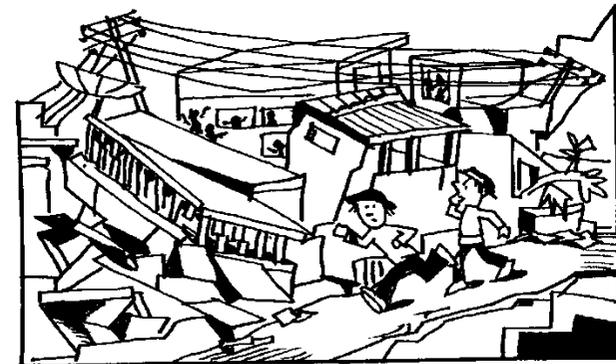
6 hours ago a large flood has suddenly hit the centre of the city in the middle of the work day. You are members of the population and have been affected and buildings have fallen. You have been rescued and you have been moved to a shelter. A group of first responders comes to try to help you

Please take on a role. A few of you will play you are fire-fighters, a few as Red Cross volunteers, a few of you are young men and women who are keen to help, a few of you are teachers

Please decide now what role you will play and share this with everybody in your group

Please prepare yourself as a group (5 minutes)

Please behave as serious as possible (try not to laugh during simulation)



PFA simulation

- Ask helpers
 - How was the experience for you?
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PFA simulation

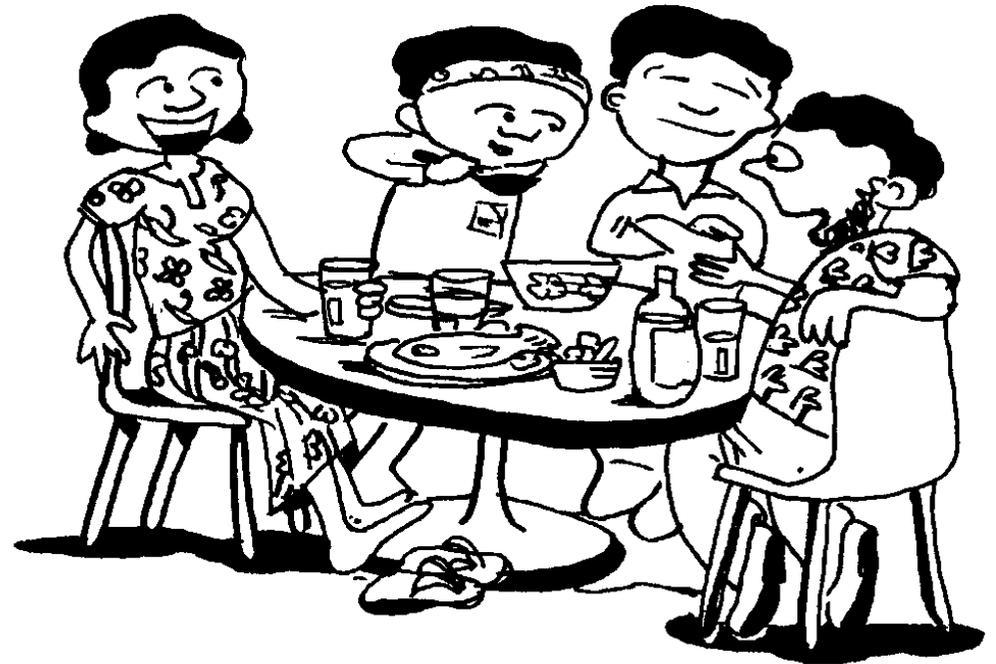
- Ask affected population
 - How was the experience for you?
 - What went well?
 - What could have gone better?

what does she need?



Take care of yourself so you can take care of others!

1. Prepare yourself for helping, and always ask: “Am I ready to help?”
2. Manage your stress and adopt healthy work and life habits
3. After helping, take time to rest and reflect
4. If needed, seek help for yourself



Final review

- What did you like about this workshop?
- How should we change this workshop?
- What are you likely to do different because of this workshop?

