

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID: AN OVERVIEWS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

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COURSE OVERVIEW

- SEGMENT 1 – WHAT IS A DISASTER?
- SEGMENT 2 – THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF DISASTERS
- SEGMENT 3 – PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA)

IT IS NOT A MATTER OF IF

IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF WHEN

**DISASTERS ARE AN
UNFORTUNATE FACT OF LIFE**

SEGMENT 1

WHAT IS A “DISASTER”?

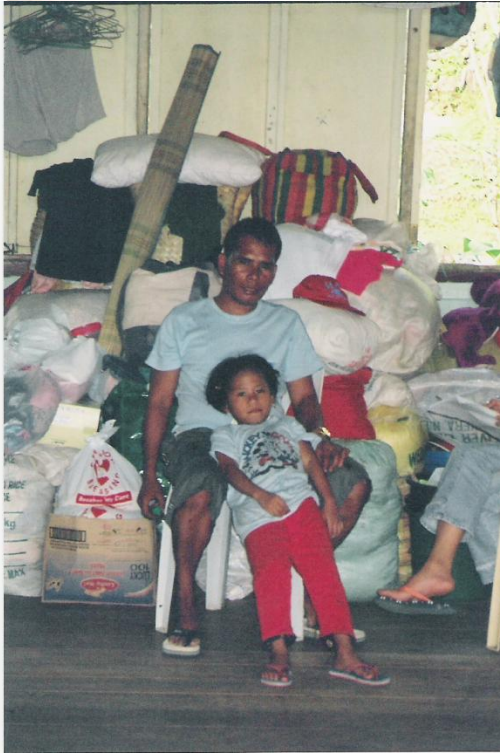
A DISASTER CAN BE ANY EVENT THAT IS EMOTIONALLY OVERWHELMING

A DISASTER CAN BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN NEW WAYS TO COPE AND TO BECOME MORE RESILIENT



NATURAL DISASTER GUINSAGON LANDSLIDE, LEYTE, REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, FEBRUARY, 2006

**ONLY 580 SURVIVORS
MOURN THE 1112 WHO DIED**



ACCIDENTAL DISASTER

**KOREAN AIR
CRASH, AUGUST
1997, GUAM**



**FAMILY ASSISTANCE
CENTER, GUAM – MORE
THAN 500 KOREAN
FAMILY MEMBERS
MOURN THE DEATH OF
228 LOVED ONES**



DELIBERATE DISASTER

TERRORIST ATTACK THE WORLD TRADE CENTER NEW YORK CITY



9/11/2001



DISASTER FACTORS

- SIZE – LARGE OR SMALL?
- NATURAL , ACCIDENTAL, DELIBERATE
- ANTICIPATED OR UNEXPECTED
- WHO IS AFFECTED
- WHERE IT HAPPENS
- TIME OF DAY OR NIGHT
- LEVEL OF PREPAREDNESS
- EFFECTIVENESS OF RESPONSE

PERSONAL FACTORS

- **AGE AND GENDER**
- **CULTURE**
- **SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS**
- **PRIOR DISASTER EXPERIENCES**
- **PHYSICAL HEALTH AND LIMITATIONS**
- **SEVERITY OF LOSSES**
- **AVAILABILITY OF SOCIAL SUPPORT**

SEGMENT 2 - THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF DISASTERS



We Wear our Past Losses As “Strings of Pearls”



Pearls Begin as Painful Bits of Irritating Sand or Coral that find their Way into an Oyster

In the same way, traumatic events enter our lives and give us emotional pain



Our first experience with emotional loss and trauma may have been the loss of a pet, a house fire, an accident or injury, or even the death of a family member.

Close your eyes and visualize the first loss that you can remember as a child.



As time goes on, this painful and distressing experience becomes easier to live with.

When hurt by a painful object, the oyster learns to live with it by secreting a substance called “lucre”. Over time, many coats build up and a smooth pearl is created. The finished pearl is quite beautiful, in spite of it’s original core.



The String of Pearls as Our Personal History of Loss

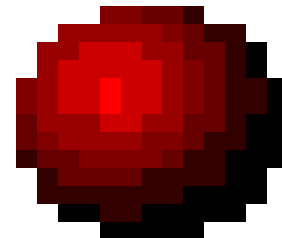
We continue to experience traumatic events all of our lives. Each event creates a “pearl”, or an encapsulated memory, and we begin to string them, like pearls on a necklace, throughout our lives.



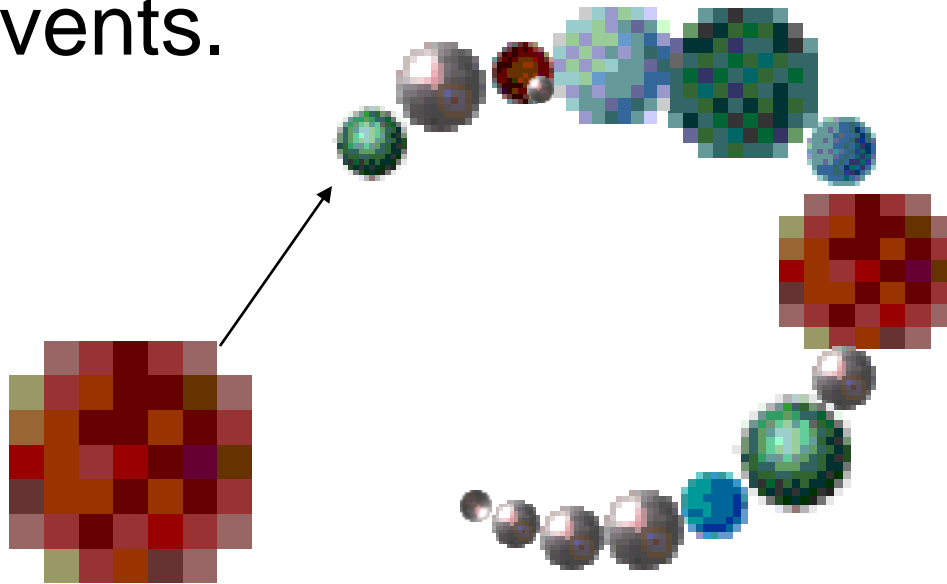
Not all “pearls” are the same size.

Sometimes, when the traumatic event is very large, even when “coated”, the pearl will remain much larger than less traumatic events.

Some events are more difficult for us to cope with, and we cannot completely “coat” them. These “half-formed” pearls are not easy to live with and still hurt and affect our everyday lives.



When strung together, all of the pearls in our necklace are strung in order. All of the pearls also touch each other. In the same way, all of our traumatic memories are connected. Recent events remind us of past events.



YOUR OWN STRING OF PEARLS

- REMEMBER THAT YOU ALWAYS WEAR YOUR OWN STRING OF PEARLS
- YOU WILL BE AFFECTED WHEN THOSE YOU WORK WITH SOMEHOW REMIND YOU OF YOUR OWN PERSONAL DISASTER EXPERIENCES

WATCH YOUR BOUNDRIES!

NORMAL REACTIONS TO DISASTERS

- **PEOPLE NORMALLY REACT TO DISASTERS IN PREDICTABLE WAYS**
- **DISASTER-RELATED REACTIONS USUALLY LAST UP TO 4 - 6 WEEKS**
- **PEOPLE ARE USUALLY UPSET DURING THIS PERIOD AS THEY FEEL THEIR TROUBLESOME REACTIONS WILL LAST FOREVER**

NORMAL DISASTER REACTIONS CAN AFFECT OUR:

- FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS**
- ABILITY TO THINK**
- BEHAVIOR**
- PHYSICAL HEALTH**
- SPIRITUALITY**

CHILDREN GO THROUGH NORMAL REACTIONS TOO

- AGES 0-3 - FEAR OF ABANDONMENT
- AGES 4-6 - REGRESSION
- AGES 7-12 – ACT OUT STRESSES
- AGES 13-18 – REGRESS (TESTING) OR
PROGRESS (GROW)

SEGMENT 3 – PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA)

- **WHAT IS PFA?**

**AN EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTION
THAT HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE IN :**

- HELPING PEOPLE COPE**
- PREVENTING LONG-TERM
MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**
- STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE**

WHAT PFA IS NOT

- PFA IS NOT A “THERAPY”
- PFA IS NOT A “CURE ALL”
- PFA IS NOT EFFECTIVE IN DEALING WITH SERIOUS MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS
- IT IS NOT REALISTIC TO THINK THAT PROVIDING PFA WILL “FIX” PEOPLE AND MAKE THEM HAPPY

6 PFA ACTIONS

- 1 – ESTABLISHING RAPPORT AND A HELPING RELATIONSHIP**
- 2 – PROMOTING SAFETY**
- 3 – PROMOTING CALM**
- 4 – PROMOTING EMPOWERMENT**
- 5 – PROMOTING HOPE**
- 6 – PROMOTING CONNECTEDNESS**



DEVELOPING RAPPORT AND A HELPING RELATIONSHIP

**DEVELOPING A
HELPING
RELATIONSHIP WILL
NOT ALWAYS TAKE
WORDS**

**DEVELOPING A
HELPING
RELATIONSHIP WILL
ALWAYS REQUIRE
SINCERE CARING**

HOW TO DEVELOP RAPPORT AND A HELPING RELATIONSHIP

- **INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND EXPLAIN WHAT YOUR ROLE IS**
- **RESPECT PERSONAL BOUNDRIES**
- **CONVEY GENUINE INTEREST AND CONCERN**
- **PROVIDE COMFORT, SUPPORT AND A NON-JUDGEMENTAL ATTITUDE**
- **WATCH YOUR NON-VERBALS!**

PROMOTING SAFETY

- HELP PEOPLE MEET BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD, CLOTHING AND SHELTER
- PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM FURTHER EMOTIONAL OR PHYSICAL HARM
- PROMOTE A SENSE OF SECURITY THROUGH ORIENTING AND REASSURING

PROMOTING CALM

- LISTEN TO PEOPLE WHO WISH TO SHARE THEIR STORIES
- BE FRIENDLY AND MODEL CALMNESS
- BE GENUINELY COMPASSIONATE AND NON-JUDGEMENTAL
- DO NOT ASK INTRUSIVE QUESTIONS
- PROVIDE ACCURATE AND TIMELY INFORMATION

PROMOTING EMPOWERMENT

- GIVE PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS THAT STEER PEOPLE TOWARD HELPING THEMSELVES
- ENGAGE PEOPLE IN PROBLEM SOLVING TO MEET THEIR OWN NEEDS
- PROMOTING THE RIGHT TO GET HELP

EMPOWERMENT COMES FROM
HELPING PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES

PROMOTING HOPE

- ASK THE PERSON: “Have you gone through anything like this before?” “What helped get you through it the last time?”
- LET PEOPLE KNOW WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE
- LET PEOPLE KNOW THEY ARE NOT ALONE

PROMOTING CONNECTNESS

- **HELP PEOPLE IDENTIFY FRIENDS, FAMILY AND LOVED ONES WHO CAN BE A SOURCE OF SUPPORT**
- **HELP KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER WHENEVER POSSIBLE**
- **HELP PEOPLE FEEL COMFORTABLE IN COMMUNICATING THEIR FEARS AND DISASTER RELATED NEEDS**

EMERGENCY REFERRALS

YOU NEED TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION
WHEN PEOPLE ARE:

- INCAPACITATED AND UNABLE TO PROVIDE BASIC SELF-CARE
- A DANGER TO THEMSELVES
- A DANGER TO OTHERS

EVEN WHEN IN DOUBT, CALL 911

CONSIDER MAKING A MENTAL HEALTH REFERRAL WHEN:

- **CLIENTS APPEAR TO BE SUFFERING FROM SEVERE DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY**
- **CLIENTS MAY HAVE PTSD**
- **CLIENTS ARE DRINKING TOO MUCH OR ABUSING DRUGS**
- **CLIENTS ARE ABUSING THEIR SPOUSE OR CHILDREN**

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

- YOU ARE NOT “IMMUNE” TO DISASTER RELATED STRESS – “COMPASSION FATIGUE” CAN BE A PROBLEM
- MONITOR YOUR FEELINGS AND YOUR OWN LEVEL OF STRESS
- TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT BURNOUT
 - TIME OUT
 - COMMUNICATE
 - MAINTAIN A SUPPORT SYSTEM

WRAP UP

ANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS?

HAWAII RED CROSS INFORMATION

- WEBSITE: hawaiiredcross.org
- VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR: Jessie Kozel (739-8113) or kozelj@hawaiiredcross.org
- 3 required courses:
 - Fulfilling our Mission
 - Foundations of Disaster Mental Health
 - Psychological First Aid