

DEALING WITH TRAUMA AND CRISIS.

What is trauma.

Trauma refers to an experience that is emotionally painful, distressful, or shocking, which can result in lasting mental and physical effects. Emotional harm resulting from a traumatic incident is essentially a normal response to an extreme event. There is not a specific time period during which a person will react to a traumatic incident; reactions may appear immediately after the event or days, weeks, or even years later.

Types of Traumatic Situations:

Hi Jacking.
Armed Robbery
Serious Team Illness on the field. (Tibet Situation)
Death of Family Member
Team Member run over by motor vehicle.
Suicide: Team member outreach or other
Act of Terrorism
Civil Unrest in a nation
Rape
Murder.

Response to Trauma:

Traumatic events can result in physical, emotional, cognitive and/or behavioral change. This reaction can be either beneficial or negative.

Emotional trauma is a shock to one's self or spirit that overwhelms the coping mechanisms of an individual or group that often results in stress. (Cover more on PTSD)

Common Emotional Feelings:

Violated.
Fear
Insecurity
Awareness (Heightened and possibly overly so)
Vulnerability.
Anger
Guilt.
Grief.

Emotional Response to Trauma varies according contributing factors such as.

Intensity of Event
duration of incident
perception of danger
level of exposure

Individual Profile
coping skills
social characteristics
previous experience

Debriefing from a Trauma Situation:

Debriefing a trauma situation is of vital importance, everyone experiences and interprets a traumatic event differently. We need to understand that and embrace it. We can not determine or try to even imply how one should have experienced it or not.

Profile of the Debriefer.

A good understanding of the active and reflective listening skills and has practiced it regularly.

Must feel safe with the individual.

Naturally affirm an individuals perceptions, and feelings.

Some form of training in counseling to know what clues to listen to.

The ability to share there own story.

A Plan for Debriefing

The following outline has been built upon the CISM model: (Critical Incident Stress Management)

Debriefing for maximum effect should be made up of two stages.

Stage 1

Group process (30-45 min.) provided immediately after a traumatic event once the individuals involved are disengaged from the on-scene operations.

Goals and Process of Debriefing After a Traumatic Event:

The goals of the debriefing are to:

- mitigate or lessen the impact of the event
- accelerate the recovery process
- assess the need for debriefing or other support
- reduce cognitive, emotional, and physiological symptoms

The process of the debriefing aims to:

- establish non-threatening social environment
- allow rapid ventilation of stressful experience
- equalize access to facts and information
- restore cognitive processing of event
- provide information for stress survival
- affirm value of individuals
- establish linkages for additional support
- develop expectancies for the future

The debriefing components are as follows:

1. Introduction

- introduce facilitator (hosting - creating an emotionally safe atmosphere)
- state purpose (disclosure skills)
- invite voluntary participation
- establish ground rules (not necessarily therapy, not investigation)
- assure confidentiality (no notes, recordings, etc.)
- describe process
- offer additional support

2. Exploration

- ask individuals to describe what just occurred (open-ended questioning)
- allow only minimal clarification questions (silence, paraphrasing)
- review experiences and reactions (summarizing skills)
- assess need for more help
- reassure as necessary

3. Information

- accept/summarize their exploration (validate and summarizing skills)
- normalize experiences and reactions (extend empathy and support; speak from personal experience if possible)
- teach multiple stress survival skills (elicit experiences from individuals)
- advise on diet & nutrition, alcohol/caffeine avoidance
- pay attention to proper rest & relationships (speak from experience)
- recommend recreation & exercise (speak from experience)

4. Aftermath

- make personal contact with each participant (open-ended consultations)
- assure one-on-one follow-up
- make determination to proceed with debriefing

The debriefing process may provide sufficient support to groups or individuals, however it may happen that the debriefing will reveal the need for further support.

Indicators that additional support may be necessary include:

- intense emotions, unusual behavior
- unfinished business
- a sense (sometimes subtle) of incompleteness
- excessive silence

Stage 2.

A follow up meeting of duration of 2 to 3 hrs approximately 78 hrs after the event should aim to serve the following points.

- prevent stress dysfunction
- screen and prioritize individual needs
- identify areas for follow-up support and referrals

The following outline is a good example to follow, it exist of seven steps.

Stage 1	Introduction	Introduce intervention team members, explain process, set expectations, establish confidentiality (active listening throughout process)
Stage 2	Fact	Have each participant describe the nature of their participation, from a cognitive perspective. "What did you see/hear/do?" (open-ended, fact focused questions)
Stage 3	Thought Reaction	Solicit cognitive responses to: "What were you thinking as this was happening? What aspect held the most negative impact for you?", transition from cognitive to emotional processing. (open-ended, cognitive focused questions)
Stage 4	Emotional Reaction	Solicit emotional reactions to or consequences of cognitive responses given in Stage 3. "How has this experience affected you?" (open-ended, emotional focused questions)
Stage 5	Reframing	Transition from emotional domain back to cognitive. "What lessons could be learned from this experience?" or "What is something positive that you will take away from this experience?" Be gentle here - Do not insist that people identify positive learning if they are not ready. (open-ended, reframing questions)
Stage 6	Teaching	Educate participants to normal reactions (not necessarily shared by everyone) and teach basic stress management, if applicable. (disclosure, speaking skills)
Stage 7	Re-entry	Summarize experience with emphasis on positive learning aspects.