

DISASTER SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL CARE TIP SHEETS

<p>Topic:</p>	<p>Connecting with Survivors</p>
<p>Aim:</p>	<p>This tip sheet contains tips on connecting emotionally and spiritually with disaster survivors and responders.</p>
<p>General Information:</p>	<p>There are numerous ways that caregivers can support those who have been affected by a disaster. The following is a list of the principles of crisis intervention along with how to implement that particular principle.</p>
<p>Goals for Connecting:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't argue. • Don't minimize the problem. • Find something to agree upon. • Establish rapport. • Use active listening techniques. • Emotionally connect with them and provide a safe harbor. • Provide strength, support, and guidance. • Provide a safe place where people can tell their story and experience all the thoughts, feelings and emotions.
<p>Qualities for Connecting:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being genuine. • Showing accurate empathic understanding. • Expressing unconditional positive regard. • Conveying warmth. • Being tactful and sensitive.
<p>Factors which Prevent Connecting:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busyness. • Being unengaged and inattentive to the survivor in front of you. • Failing to start at a non-threatening place that is non-invasive. • Being demanding; probing for emotional response. • Conveying distance or coldness. • Provoking guilt; blaming the person. • Being judgmental and dogmatic. • Responding to survivor anger with harshness, anger or disappointment.
<p>Connecting in Practice:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be objective and meet the person "where they are" and with "what they are feeling." • Facilitate access to social support systems (family, friends, neighbors, services). • Help people recognize and draw on their own strengths. • Affirm the uniqueness of each individual's situation and reactions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them to understand that their stress response, while it may feel strange, is okay. • “Reach out” and provide for practical needs: nourishment, heat/cooling, clothes, blankets, telephone, a place to rest. • Provide accurate information on safety, where to get assistance. • Preserve an interpersonal safety zone protecting basic personal space (e.g., privacy, quiet, personal effects). • Minimize a person’s exposure to gruesome images, morbidity, and traumatic scenes. • Listen supportively to those who want to share their story. • Avoid probing for details or pushing for emotional responses. • Avoid giving advice (unless asked). • Ask how they (and their loved ones) are doing, and what you can do to help. • Meet them where they are, without judgment and your expectations.
Outreach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You do not always have to talk about spiritual issues, pray, or read scripture to minister to the spiritual needs of people. • Meeting the practical needs is a part of spiritual ministry as well. • Disaster mental health workers seem less threatening when they refer to their services as “assistance,” “support” or “talking”. • The most effective interventions are usually done on-scene. • It seems that people are most open to talking about things over a cup of coffee or a meal.
Rejection:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregivers must be prepared for rejection and anger responses from people affected by the disaster. • The emotional and spiritual caregiver should not personalize a refusal to talk or what may appear to be rejection.
Other Resources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harding, S. (2007). <i>Spiritual care and mental health for disaster response and recovery</i>. New York: New York Disaster Interfaith Services. • National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2006). <i>Psychological first-aid: Field operations guide for community religious professionals</i>. Los Angeles, CA: Author. • National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters. <i>Light our way: A guide for spiritual care in times of disasters</i>. Arlington, VA: Author. • Roberts, S., & Ashley, W. (2008). <i>Disaster spiritual care: Practical clergy responses to community, regional, and national tragedy</i>. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing.

(Adapted from: Ellers, K.L. (2008). *Emotional and spiritual care in disasters, Participant guide (Version 6.0)*, International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.)

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