

Disaster Relief Christian Forum Japan
日本災害救援キリスト者フォーラム

TIP SHEETS FOR JAPANESE PASTORS

Topic:	How NOT to Provide Volunteer and Survivor Care
Aim:	There are common statements that people make in everyday situations that can be harmful in a crisis situation. In this sheet we highlight these statements and provide ways to prevent them.
General Information:	When providing support, you should avoid saying the following phrases. On the surface, these phrases may be meant to comfort volunteers or survivors, but they can be misinterpreted.
Basic Statements to Avoid:	<p>In general, well-intentioned statements that say to a person that their experience is not as bad as they think it is, or that over simplify or minimize the experience risk alienating or offending, or even compounding the distress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I understand.” In most situations we cannot understand unless we have had the same experience. • “Don’t feel bad.” The person has a right to feel bad and will need time to feel differently. • “You’re strong” or “You’ll get through this.” After a disaster, many people do not feel strong and question if they will recover from the loss. • “Don’t cry.” It is okay to cry. • “It’s God’s will.” With a person you do not know, giving religious meaning to an event may insult or anger the person. • “It could be worse,” “At least you still have ...”, or “Everything will be okay.” It is up to the individual to decide whether things could be worse or if everything can be okay. <p>Rather than provide comfort, these types of responses could elicit a strong negative response or distance the individual from the listener. It is okay to apologize if the person reacts negatively to something that was said.</p>
How to Avoid These Errors:	<p>You can learn to avoid these misstatements. If you are new to helping people in a crisis situation, then practice with someone by role-playing. Ask a friend or team member to play the part of someone who has just come through a crisis, and talk with them as though you are a counselor. This will help you build confidence that you can help and reduce the stress that leads to mistakes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misstatements are more likely to happen when you are under stress, anxious to fix the situation, or uncomfortable with the other person. Monitor your own stress and patience, and if you cannot listen patiently, take a break. • Misstatements are more likely when we are unsure of what to say, and so fall back on quick or simplistic answers. Identify the situations most challenging for you and which you are least sure of what to say, and practice responding with a friend or colleague. • When you first start providing support to others in crisis, partner with someone who can listen to your conversations and then talk with you afterwards about your approach, manner, and ways to improve. • Remember, it is OK to say you do not know or are unsure of what to say.

	<p>Honesty is always a better course than trying to fix something you cannot fix or trying to have an answer for everything.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep an open mind to learning. We are all students, and no matter your level of experience, everyone can learn ways to improve.
Action Steps for Pastors:	<p>As a pastor, you can help prepare people in ways that reduce the risk of errors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As you coach your volunteers, be careful about putting inexperienced people into difficult situations alone. Instead, put people into teams or pairs where new people can be coached and mentored by more experienced people. • When you hold team meetings, ask people about difficult conversations they have had and role play how to handle them. • Encourage learning by being open about ways you also need to learn. Encourage people to also coach you and help you develop your skills. This openness makes it safer for people to be open about ways they need assistance.
Related Tip Sheets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Care #8- Creating an Environment for Volunteer Support
Other Resources:	

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