

**FAMILIES SURVIVING LOSS:
The Red Cross Response
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Slide 1

Foundations of Disaster Mental Health
APC-5027.4

www.adec.org

Objectives

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- ◆ Describe the role the American Red Cross Mental Health Services plays in supporting families affected by loss in local as well as national disasters
- ◆ Define the differences between grief, loss and mourning
- ◆ Cite three common reactions a child may experience in response to loss
- ◆ Describe the difference between sudden and expected loss
- ◆ Identify ways to be most helpful to grieving families

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Mental Health Mission

- ◆ Disaster mental health provides for and responds to the psychological needs of people across the continuum of disaster preparedness, response and recovery.



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Typical Red Cross Services

- ◆ Emergency housing
- ◆ Food
- ◆ Clothing
- ◆ Personal hygiene supplies
- ◆ Salvaging Supplies
- ◆ Health-related needs
- ◆ Mental health support



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Sites and Settings for MH Support

- ◆ Shelters
- ◆ Service Centers
- ◆ Emergency Aid Stations
- ◆ Outreach Teams
- ◆ Integrated Care Teams
- ◆ Headquarters
- ◆ Feeding Sites
- ◆ Call Centers

more common

Workbook Page 2-20

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Mental Health Support Is Not:

- ◆ Psychotherapy
- ◆ Ongoing counseling
- ◆ Formal assessment
- ◆ Hospitalization
- ◆ Involuntary commitment

These needs are met by referral to community resources.

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Chinese symbol for crisis

危

木 幾

+ one more part (vertical)

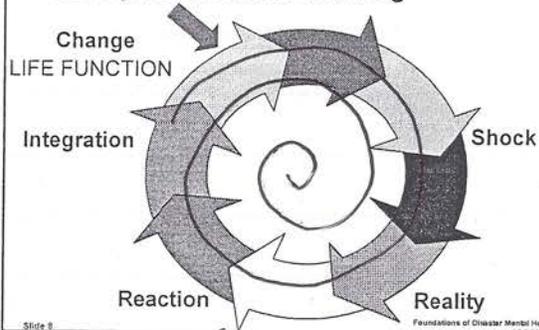
Resiliency

- ◆ Most reactions to disaster are common and expectable...most people will recover on their own
- ◆ DMH interventions can help facilitate recovery
- ◆ Some clients require special care

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ABC-3022

The Cycle of Grief & Mourning



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more of a spiral

*4-7 o'clock
hardest part
(how are we...)*

"Expected" versus Sudden Death

- | | |
|--|--|
| ◆ Anticipatory grief often eases grief after the death | ◆ Death was unexpected |
| ◆ Death may be viewed as natural | ◆ Bereaved feels completely unprepared |
| ◆ More private and personal | ◆ Death is viewed as very unnatural |
| | ◆ Often rather public—media and many people involved |

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Common Reactions to Disaster

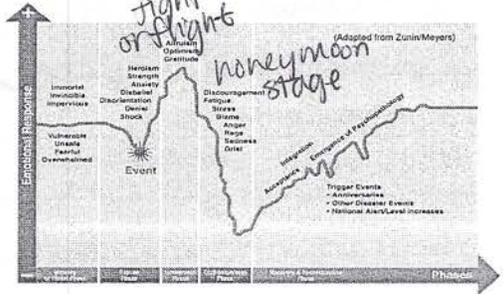
- 1 ♦ Physical
- 2 ♦ Emotional
- 3 ♦ Cognitive
- 4 ♦ Behavioral
- 5 ♦ Spiritual



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1 - can't sleep
 2 - crying
 3 - can't focus
 4 - neighbors wanting to help
 5 - revisit how life works... ?A...
 -community memorial

Disaster Response Phases



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General Adaptation Syndrome

- ♦ Alarm phase – adrenaline rush
- ♦ Adaptation phase – ongoing infusion of hormonal substances
- ♦ Exhaustion phase – depleted adrenaline, reduced effectiveness, compromised immune system

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Grieving and Mourning

- ◆ Adjustments following loss:
 - Acknowledging the reality of the loss
 - Experiencing and processing the pain and other emotional aspects of the loss
 - Making adjustments due to change in lifestyle or surroundings due to the loss
 - Finding an adaptive continuing emotional representation of what had been lost, and reinvesting in new surroundings, relationships, and/or life pursuits.

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avoid
confront
adapt

Trauma Reaction Processes

- ◆ Overwhelming emotional experience
- ◆ Temporary shut-down
- ◆ Re-engagement and processing of the experience
- ◆ Or, remaining in a dissociative or other impaired state

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Red Lion shooting

Characteristics Affecting Reactions

- ◆ Single event or ongoing
- ◆ Recurring disasters
- ◆ Natural, human-caused
- ◆ Technological accident
- ◆ Sudden or with fair warning
- ◆ Time of day
- ◆ Number of deaths and injuries
- ◆ Ongoing health concerns
- ◆ Degree of exposure

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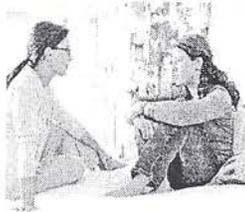
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Anybody can break
one pencil, but 20?
blame

tragedy → strength
of community

Responding to Grief

- ◆ The need to be alone
- ◆ The need to be with others
- ◆ The need to protest



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① be present &
aware

② what to do
about it

Listening

- ◆ Can stimulate your own grief issues
- ◆ Can initiate feelings of helplessness
- ◆ Demands exploration of pain
- ◆ Shows they are cared about, not just cared for

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Supporting the Bereaved

- ◆ Sit down
- ◆ Accept unconditionally
- ◆ Avoid clichés
- ◆ Listen



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Primary Needs of Grieving Children . . .

- ◆ Careful listening
- ◆ Validation of child's feelings
- ◆ Fears & anxieties addressed
- ◆ Adequate information
- ◆ Reassurance they are not to blame

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. . . Primary Needs of Grieving Children

- ◆ Involvement & inclusion
- ◆ Continued routine activities
- ◆ Modeled grief behaviors
- ◆ Opportunities to remember
- ◆ Help with overwhelming feelings

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Grieving Children: Strategies To Help

- ◆ Provide a safe place
- ◆ Use teachable moments year round
- ◆ Routines promote security & predictability
- ◆ Look for the question behind the question
- ◆ Draw from your own experiences
- ◆ Provide hope for healing

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The Developmental Perspective

- ◆ Both degree of exposure and a child's developmental level affect the impact of the disaster
- ◆ Trauma may impact developmentally appropriate behaviors
- ◆ Coping style and ability is tied to development and life experiences
- ◆ Information and honesty are critical for all developmental ages

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The Focus on Children and Families

- ◆ Families and children represent a large percentage of the population.
- ◆ Children are a vulnerable population.
- ◆ With appropriate care children do recover, even when trauma is severe.
- ◆ Children most effectively recover by means of family support.



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The Role of the Family System

- ◆ The family system is the child's primary source of support.
- ◆ A child's coping success often mirrors parent's coping.
- ◆ Families can help to support and facilitate other useful resources for the child.

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Children and Trauma

- ◆ Were once believed to be impervious to trauma-related problems
- ◆ Now identified as a vulnerable population
- ◆ Reactions usually appear quickly
- ◆ Reactions range from mild to severe
- ◆ Most initial reactions are considered common after disasters
- ◆ Children respond well to appropriate support and strategies

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Children's Reactions

- ◆ Physical
- ◆ Cognitive
- ◆ Emotional
- ◆ Behavioral



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Children's Worries and Fears

- ◆ That the event will happen again
- ◆ Personal security
- ◆ Being separated from parents
- ◆ Safety of others
- ◆ That the child somehow caused it
- ◆ Worry about things (tangible and intangible) that were lost

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Assistance with Children's Reactions

- ◆ Children do not always express their reactions verbally
- ◆ Children benefit from:
 - Realistic reassurances
 - Helping with recovery and preparedness plans
 - Routine, even in disaster settings
 - Exploring community resources that may help

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DMH Involvement at the Local Chapter

- ◆ Disaster action teams
- ◆ DMH committees
- ◆ Trainings
- ◆ Help for returning workers
- ◆ Local mental health agency relationship-building
- ◆ Chapter disaster planning and drill participation

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Family Care and Mental Health—American Red Cross

- ◆ Coordinate & manage organizations and personnel (including ARC) offering counseling, religious & other support services
- ◆ Staff processing center
- ◆ Coordinate child care
- ◆ Establish site for families to grieve privately
- ◆ Arrange interfaith memorial service

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mandated by govt