NERT Binder Addendum: Psychological First Aid

Psychological First Aid (PFA) Tools and Techniques

Time to Take Five
- Look at the stress reactions yourself or NERT teammates are displaying. Are they:
  - Beginning to impact your judgment or interactions?
  - Interfering with your ability to appear calm, caring, and competent?
  - Causing you to make decisions that place yourself or others in danger?
- If yes, say “Time to Take Five”.
  - When you hear it, do it.
  - Have the team agree to use this phrase so everyone is more likely to follow it.
- Step away from the situation and practice self-care (eat, hydrate, practice “4 For Calm”).

Realistic Supportive Self-Talk
Calming phrases can help reduce distressing emotions. This includes prayers or meditations that help calm us - the Prayer of St. Francis or the Buddhist Metta Bhavana (Loving-Kindness Meditation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distressing Emotion</th>
<th>Realistic Supportive Self Talk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guilty</td>
<td>“Good enough has to be good enough.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhausted</td>
<td>“It’s not all on me.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overwhelmed</td>
<td>“Take one piece at a time.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>“I can only control myself.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not feeling Calm, Caring, Competent</td>
<td>“I’m here to help. It doesn’t matter how I feel. It matters what I do.”</td>
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Self-Care and Stress Management

Before a Response
- Clarify, practice and exercise NERT roles
- Prepare self and loved ones
- Be aware of stress signs and stress reduction techniques that work

During a Response
- Acknowledge it is stressful
- Take breaks away from the disaster scene and survivors
- Rely on ICS, teammates, and social support networks

After a Response
- Allow time to deal with reactions
- Meet up with teammates or other responders to talk about experiences
- ALWAYS get support for suicidal thoughts, substance overuse, or violent activities

Developed by: Elizabeth McMahon, PhD & Susan Schmitz, MAIDP
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Psychological First Aid Process – Triage

Connect
Set the Tone: Calm, Caring, Competent

Name, NERT, Name

See the Need. Say the Need.

Get a “Yes.”

Direct
“Can Do”
- Use their name
- Short, simple instructions and why ("and", "because", "so that")
- Praise engagement or actions

Waiting for First Responders
- Connect if/when possible
- Short, simple, factual statements
- Emphasize what can be done and what you will do

Psychological First Aid Process – Outside of Triage

Connect
Set the Tone: Calm, Caring, Competent
- Could offer physical comfort more readily outside of triage (handshake, touch arm, hug)
- Avoid intruding, disrupting, or disrespecting survivors

Name, NERT, Name
- May get more questions about NERT, keep answers short and simple
- Explain role in brief detail

Assess
Assess the Need. Say the Need.
- Actively listen, ask questions, and observe to find the type of need
  - Medical, practical, social, psychological
- Ask important questions two different ways

Get the “Yes.”
- Expect to have directions or instructions questioned
- Overcome distrust of authority

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Direct
Medical (injuries, medication, assistive equipment, health concerns)

Practical (shelter, food, water)

Social (reunification and communication)

Psychological (distress, substance disorders, chronic mental health conditions)

Difficult Reactions
- Use their name
- Short, simple instructions and why ("and", "because", "so that")
- Praise engagement or actions
- Dazed or Passive: apply Focusing/Grounding technique
- Crying or Grieving: respect differences in displays and triggers of grief
- Worried: provide facts, admit what is not known, and give them something to do
- Panicky: apply "4 for Calm" breathing or use a Focusing/Grounding technique
- Angry: Safe, Calm, Caring, Competent

Notes: