

A Guide to Basic Psychological First Aid

January 2019

Terror attacks can expose people and community to uncertainty and stress. Emotional distress might arise during or immediately after an attack, even if you are not a direct victim of the attack. In the days that follow, some people may feel confused, distressed, fearful and numb. Do you know that basic psychological first aid can be easily administered to help our family, friends and colleagues who are affected in the aftermath of an attack?

You can help by picking up some basic psychological first aid skills.



What is Psychological First Aid (PFA)?

It is a humane, supportive and practical first response given to people or persons in emotional distress during or immediately after a crisis.

- ◇ Calming and comforting affected persons
- ◇ Understanding their needs and concerns, and respond accordingly
- ◇ Helping people access information and services
- ◇ Protecting affected persons from any further harm
- ◇ Providing practical support



The following points can guide you in administering PFA when necessary.

Psychological First Aid — A.S.A.P.



Active Listening

- Attentive
- Eye contact
- Paraphrase, summarise, clarify
- Respect privacy and ensure confidentiality
- Show your interest, attention and care



Stay Close

- Being available and present
- Build rapport and trust
- Show empathy and connect
- Appropriate physical contact
- Personal space
- Inform affected persons where they may find you



Accept Feelings

- Keep an open mind
 - Accept stories
- Accept rejection of help, if person needs space
 - Accept expressed emotions/silence
- Respect their reactions and coping strategies
 - Adopt a non-judgemental approach
- Be aware of and set aside your own biases and prejudices
 - Be patient and calm
- Acknowledge how they are feeling, and any losses or important events they share with you



Provide Practical Help

- Connect them to loved ones, community
- Refer them to professional help
- Facilitate access to basic needs
- Be honest about what you know and don't know
- Provide factual information IF you have it
- Give information at an appropriate time
- Give information in a way that the person may understand – keep it simple
- Respect a person's right to make their own decisions
- Make it clear to people that even if they refuse help now, they can still have access to help in the future

Source: Singapore Red Cross Academy

Common Signs of Stress include:



Physical

- Falling sick easily
- Cold sweat
- Dry mouth
- Headaches
- Backaches
- Breathing difficulties
- Sleep disturbances
- Rapid heartbeat
- Diarrhoea



Emotional

- **Fear** felt during and after the attack
- **Anger** at what has happened, and whoever has allowed it to happen
- **Sadness** for injuries, death and loss that occurred
- **Shame** for being helpless, or for not having reacted as one should have
- **Guilt** for surviving, or because you did not do enough



Mental

- Overly alert
- Forgetfulness
- Poor concentration
- Loss of sense of reality
- Flashbacks of incident
- Easily irritated
- Inability to feel positive
- Recurring thoughts of trauma
- Sense of loss

Source: MHA

For more information on coping with crises, you may refer to

www.sgsecure.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/coping-with-crisis_final.pdf.

SGSecure@Workplaces Bulletin

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