Managing (ourselves in) behavioral emergencies in the remote setting

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What makes the wilderness a great place to have a crisis?

All Play:

- New environments can be anxiety producing
- Medication changes
- Continuous contact with peers
- Lack of distraction
- Technology withdrawal
- Silence as the unfamiliar foe
- Lack of coping skills
- Stress Induced mental health crisis
- Prior trauma
Wilderness vs Urban
Evacuations from the remote context – the how of it.

Urban Context
- Acute presentation
  - Crisis Center
  - Police
  - Emergency Department

Wilderness Context
- Acute Wilderness Presentation
  - Tent
  - Hiking out
  - Sat Phone for help
First things first - Scene Safety

Assess: How serious are the behaviors?

Behaviors

Disruptive

Destructive
Disruptive Behaviors:

Bullying (can also be destructive)
Disordered Eating
Foul language
Anxiety attacks
Threats of Self Harm
All manner of drama
Destructive Behaviors

Threats to Safety

Physical and Verbal Aggression- threats of harming others

Verbalizing Suicidal Intent with Lethal, Available Plan

Bizarre and erratic behaviors
De-escalation

“To understand what another person is saying, you must assume that it is true and try to imagine what it could be true of.” (Miller’s Law)

A technique used during a potential crisis situation to attempt to prevent a person from causing harm to himself/herself or others

• Three Main Factors
  • Self control: track your own responses
  • Physical presence: use supportive body language
  • Safety: personal space and exits
• Risk is not a threat
• Do you have to do this right now?
Remote management; Skills for the HOW...

Goal:
Stabilize and transport to definitive care
Addressing Suicide and Self-harm

- Appropriate concern, appropriate actions
- Mandate to pass to higher level of care
- Can be connected and straightforward
- Continuous presence
- Removing lethal means, when possible
- Participation, empathy, distraction, safe minutes

Gone are the days of safety contracts
Responding to Destructive Behaviors

Stabilize and rapidly evacuate.
Call 911 when available from the field.
Remove others from exposure to harm.
Eliminate lethal means.
Calming yourself is the best means of calming the other.
It’s ok to run.
De-escalation
Expert consensus.

Respect Personal Space
Do not be provocative
Establish verbal contact
Be concise

**Identify wants and feelings**
Listen closely to what the participant is saying
Agree or disagree
Set clear limits (enforceable statements)
Offer choices and optimism
Debrief the participant and staff

Richmond, et al 2012
The way out of the woods with drama

Regulation

Avoid power struggles

Use enforceable statements

State/set expectations

Avoid participation as acting bored might be the right thing to do.
Psychological First Aid

CALM
SAFETY
CONNECTION
EFFECTIVE ACTION
HOPE

GOALS:
- Decrease arousal and re-establish safety.
Engagement, involvement and service

The show must go on

Tools:

- **Combat Helplessness**:
  - What has worked in the past?
  - Activities of wilderness life

- **Engage the Cortex**
  - Tents
  - Dinner Crew
  - Maps
  - Leadership
Hideout in the present.
Breathing, Grounding, Hope.

**TOOL:**

- Following the breathe-path to the present moment
- Hold for 4
- Belly Breathing
- Grounding – 4 colors you see
- 3 things you hear
Practicing and Supporting Distress Tolerance

Innovate "coping skills"

Pre-existing Coping Skills

Wilderness TOOLS

- Distraction: Find us on the map
- Engage: Journal (and share)
- Color or draw
- Rock Labyrinth
- YOGA

What’s your innovation?
Involvement
Regulation
Redirection
Journal
Draw
Exercise
Extremes of sensation- stream crossing
Survive something (a little adversity goes a long way)
Breathing techniques-e.g., Deep breath in- count to 4- deep breath out

Coping Skills
Wilderness Style
Program Support

Planning/ Training/Rehearsal

Screening

Rehearsal

After Action (Hot Wash) FEELING

Communication Terminology (Safe or Unsafe) Destructive or Disruptive
Communication Templates

Create YOUR program’s Template

Establish the language you will use

Practice often

Review

This is ________, calling from ________ to request ____________ (Support/Evac) for destructive behaviors:

Describe objective actions of the participant.
1.
2.
3.

I’m requesting
- Guidance
- Tactical Support
- Evacuation support
- Other

Plan:

Contingency Plan:
Questions or comments?
Contact:

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Resources and References


- Managing Intense Emotions,” Psychological First Aid at http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/NMH05-0210/NMH05-0210.pdf

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Psychological First Aid http://www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid

- Teen suicide hotline: https://teenlineonline.org