Workshop Objectives

Define Psychological First Aid (PSA).

Better understand basic brain science.

Identify the five principles of PSA.

Gain practical and usable PSA tools.
Really, we want TWO things...

Paradigm Shift

Real Life Tools
Industry Trends

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

• Organized for rescuers after traumatic incidents.

• Participants are often required to participate.

• Participants are asked to re-live the stressor, the event, and thoughts and emotions during and after the event

Research shows this may be detrimental to healing process
2002 Cochrane Review of Psychological Debriefing (PD)

Rose, Bisson, & Wessely, 2003

Psychological First Aid Toolkit, WRMC 2015, Portland, OR
Industry Trends

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- Organized for rescuers after traumatic incidents.
- Participants are often required to participate.
- Participants are asked to re-live the stressor, the event, and thoughts and emotions during and after the event.

Psychological First Aid (PSA)

- Developed by multiple agencies.
- Attempts to address the initial physiologic response to trauma and need for safety.
- Goal of mitigating long term stress injuries.

Research shows this may be detrimental to healing process.

Informed and supported by recent research.

Psychological First Aid Toolkit, WRMC 2015, Portland, OR
Psychological First Aid: Current Research

Hobfoll et al Psychiatry 70:2007
Stress Injuries

Objectives of first aid:

• Assess LIFE THREATS and preserve life

• Do no harm

• **Treatment to mitigate future complications**

• Decide on evac/referral to higher care
Basic Brain Science

Neo-Cortical Brain

Limbic (Mammalian) Brain

Reptilian (Lower) Brain

LaDue_2012
Building the House

- Neo-Cortex
- Neo-Mammalian / Limbic System
- Reptilian Brain / Brain Stem
- Basic Functions

Psychological First Aid Toolkit, WRMC 2015, Portland, OR
Basic Functions:

Vital Organs’ Control Center
Heart Rate
Breathing Rate
Visual Tracking
Sympathetic and Parasympathetic Systems
Building the House

- Neo-Cortex
- Neo-Mammalian / Limbic System
- Reptilian Brain / Brain Stem
- Hormonal and Emotional Regulation
- Basic Functions
Hormonal and Emotional Regulation:

- Pain and Pleasure
- Intrinsic Memory
- Hormone Regulation
- Anger
- Panic
- Fear
Building the House

- Neo-Cortex
- Neo-Mammalian / Limbic System
- Reptilian Brain / Brain Stem

- Executive Functions
- Hormonal and Emotional Regulation
- Basic Functions
Executive Functions:

- Speech
- Attention
- Problem-Solving
- Creativity
- Working Memory
- Learning
Building the House

Neo-Cortex

Language/Ideas

Executive Functions

Hormonal and Emotional Regulation

Basic Functions

Neo-Mammalian / Limbic System

Emotions/Feelings

Reptilian Brain / Brain Stem

Physical Sensations
A Normal, Adaptive Response to an Abnormal Situation

“Bear! Run!”

FEAR
Hormone Release
Activation of Fight or Flight

Sympathetic response
Increased Arousal
A Normal, Adaptive Response to an Abnormal Situation

“Not a bear...whew”

ALL CLEAR

Parasympathetic response
Return to calm
Stress Injury Formation

FEAR
Hormone Release
Activation of Fight or Flight

Sympathetic response
Increased Arousal

“I’m going to die”

Response system overwhelmed

Emotional Connection

Helplessness

ALL CLEAR

Psychological First Aid Toolkit, WRMC 2015, Portland, OR
Sights
Sounds
Smells
Sensations
Post-Traumatic Stress Response

- Thoughts
- Visual Cues
- Sounds
- Smells
- Emotions
- Sensations

- Hyper-arousal
- Avoidance
- Negative Mood & Cognitions
Psychological First Aid: Current Research

Hobfoll et al Psychiatry 70:2007
PSA Defined

Psychological First Aid (PSA) is an evidence-formed modular approach to help in the immediate aftermath of disaster, terrorism or other significant trauma event.

Goals:

• To reduce initial distress, and thus long-term morbidity
• To foster short- and long-term adaptive functioning and coping
The 5 Principles

- Safety
- Calming
- Self/Collective Efficacy
- Connection
- Hope
SAFETY

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT BY:

• Mitigating the scene as much as possible by reducing chaos and removing patients from perceived threats.

• Reflecting evidence of safety.
SAFETY

- Mitigating the scene as much as possible by reducing chaos and removing patients from perceived threats.
- Reflecting evidence of safety.

DEMO

- Watch this short demonstration.
- Note where you see “Safety.”
CREATE CALM BY:

• Calming yourself first - being the dominant nervous system.

• Emphasizing the present, the practical, and the possible.
Psychological First Aid Toolkit, WRMC 2015, Portland, OR

Communication

Patient

“This is Really Bad!”

Panic

Elevated Heart Rate
Elevated Resp. Rate
Sweating
Shaking

Responder

“Calm Down”

Panic!

Elevated Heart Rate
Elevated Resp. Rate
Sweating
Shaking

English

Chinese
Communicating CALM

Patient

Responder

“Things are Going to be Fine”
Communicating CALM

Patient

Responder

“Things are Going to be Fine”
Self- and Collective Efficacy

Find a Partner close by to you.

One Person:  Share a Story

The Other Person:  Listen
Self- and Collective Efficacy

CREATE SELF AND COLLECTIVE EFFICACY BY:

• Involving the person in problem-solving, self-care, and rescue - Asking people what else they can do and what they should not do.

• Recognizing and reminding people or existing strengths and past experiences.
CREATE CONNECTION BY:

• Building an on-scene relationship.

• Prioritizing and helping people. Contact friends, family, loved ones (including pets) as soon as possible.
HOPE

CREATE HOPE BY:

• Reflecting specific, accurate, positive facts and predictable, realistic steps.

• Personally maintaining and communicating hope.
The 5 Principles

- Safety
- Calming
- Self/Collective Efficacy
- Connection
- Hope
Psychological First Aid Training

6 hour free certificate online course

http://learn.nctsn.org
List of References


- Psychological First Aid. http://learn.nctsn.org

- Disaster Distress Helpline: Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
- Disasterdistress.sahmsa.gov

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

- National Center for PTSD at http://www.ptsd.va.gov/


- Siegel, D. J. (2010), Mindsight, Random House, New York, NY