

MODULE 3

Consequences of a Changed Community Environment Post-Disaster

Consequences of a Changed Community Environment Post-Disaster

Description:

- Sets the stage to become aware of the characteristics of the “second disaster”

Purpose:

- To conceptualize the impact of the changed environment

Consequences of a Changed Community Environment Post-Disaster

QUESTION:

How does the change of familiar environments post-disaster affect people?

- house
- roads
- ◆ lack of electricity/water
- ◆ employment
- ◆ schools

Consequences of a Changed Community Environment Post-Disaster

- By destroying the meaning of everyday experience, as previously known to the individual, the capacity to orient oneself and perform daily tasks is distorted, adding to the suffering and sense of loss.

Consequences of a Changed Community Environment Post-Disaster

- The cumulative effect of the disappearance of expectable sites and places produces differing levels of psychosocial trauma and loss reactions.

Consequences of a Changed Community Environment Post-Disaster

- The sudden loss of concrete boundaries related to one's socio-cultural environment affects each domain of his/her life.

Consequences of a Changed Community Environment Post-Disaster

- The ability to master one's daily life routine is notably affected.
 - Social Interaction...changed or lost
 - Neighbors
 - Friends
 - Colleagues. etc.

Consequences of a Changed Community Environment Post-Disaster

- The universality of response to traumatic events which destroy the physical structures of a community...
 - Manifested by different psychosocial reactions in different cultures.
 - These behaviors offer insight into the meaning of the experience within the cultural framework

Consequences of a Changed Community Environment Post-Disaster

- The pervasive sense of disorientation will:
 - Impact one's ability to function within his/her roles.
 - Housekeeper
 - Business professional
 - Teacher, etc.
- Effectiveness of functionality will be altered.

Community
response to disaster
evolves through
multiple stages

Many emotional reactions of disaster survivors stem from problems of daily living and impact brought about by the disaster.

Stressor-Stress Response Concept...

Factors that Determine Stressfulness:

- Physical harm to self or loved one
- Psychological overlay of:
 - Pain
 - Physical debility
 - Loss of function
 - Need for rehabilitation
 - Dependency

Stressor-Stress Response Concept...

Factors that Determine Stressfulness:

- Lack of warning
- Warning: cues protective action
- No warning:
 - Shock and awe
 - Maximum terror
 - Maximum disruption

Stressor-Stress Response Concept...

Factors that Determine Stressfulness:

Shattering the illusion of safety in disaster, the individual suddenly becomes aware of the presence of death or personal vulnerability to great harm.

Stressor-Stress Response Concept...

Factors that Determine Stressfulness:

Disruption of support systems...

- Separation from loved ones
- Death of loved ones
- Displacement
- Disruption at home, work, or school
- Crisis of faith

Morbidity & Mortality

- **Injury**
- **Disease**
- **Death**

Material Losses

- **Damage**
- **Destruction**
- **Economic loss**

Social Disruption

- **Disruption of activities**
- **Population displacement**
- **Impact on health services**

Psychosocial Impact

- **Distress response**
- **Behavior change**
- **Psychiatric illness**

Citizens/survivors are distinguished by:

- Proximity to event
- Intensity of exposure
- Degree of personal harm
- Role in response and recovery

Individual Response

Time-Phased

**Response During
Disorganization Of The
Community**

Individual Response

Physical, emotional, cognitive,
behavioral, and spiritual
responses are time-phased:

- **Immediate**
- **Short-term**
- **Delayed**

Short-term Responses

- Appetite and dietary change
- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Headaches

Random Responses

- Sleep problems
- Aches and pains
- Persistent fatigue
- Lowered resistance to colds and infections

Short-term Responses

- Guilt
 - “Survivor guilt”
- Helplessness
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling detached

Random Responses

- Grief/Sadness
- Fragility
- Feeling vulnerable
- Hopelessness

Delayed Responses

- Emotional numbing
- Self-blame
- Shame
- Change in awareness of one's surroundings

Short Term Responses

Cognitive

- Disbelief
- Confusion
- Slowed thinking
- Distorted sense of time
- Impaired problem solving
- Loss of interest in activities that were once pleasurable

Random Responses

Cognitive

- Difficulty concentrating
- Poor attention span
- Loss of ability to prioritize
- Difficulty making decisions
- Decreased self-confidence
- Intrusive images of the disaster

Short-term Responses

- Startle reactions
- Difficulty expressing oneself
- Restlessness
- Constant talking
- Slowed reactions

Short-term Responses

- Relationship problems
- Appetite changes
- Withdrawal
- Inability to rest
- Accident proneness
- Arguments
- Angry outbursts
- Increased use of tobacco and alcohol

Future problem Responses

Behavioral

- Avoidance of reminders of the event
- Employment problems
- Lowered activity level
- Increased use of alcohol and/or drugs
- Constant need to talk about disaster experience

Long Term Responses Spiritual

- Intense use of prayer

Grateful for being alive

Promising acts of contrition

If loved ones continue to stay safe

Random Responses

Spiritual

- Profound loss of trust
- Loss of faith in self
- Intense sense of religious believes
- Complying with forgotten rituals

Delayed Responses

Spiritual

- Questioning religious and spiritual values
- Loss (or renewal) of *purpose*
- Loss (or gain) in *self-confidence*
- Loss of (or renewed) *faith* in higher being

- Return of magical thinking

Long Term Consequences

STAGE: Late Aftermath

- Long-term rebuilding:
 - Up to one year or more.
- Evolution of a strong community morale.
- Individual problems needing increased psychosocial assistance surface.

LATE AFTERMATH

A percentage of the population will continue to show...

- Continuing problems with individuals from the private/government/reconstruction sectors
- Problems with landlords
- Living in overcrowded homes/trailers
- Increase in domestic violence and gangs
- Traffic problems
- Lack of programs for children
- Increase in family tension

Community Solidarity Phase

- **Duration:** weeks to months
- Survivor optimism
- Gratitude for survival
- Community solidarity
- Bonding
- Community acts to protect survivors

Community Solidarity

- Assistance pours into the area:
 - humanitarian / monetary
- Media focuses on event...
- MEDIA MESSAGE:
 - *Belief that life will rapidly return to normal*
- Cooperation to start repair of buildings and roads

Reconstruction Phase

- Duration: months to years
- Rebuilding continues
- The new reality is accepted
- Anniversaries or reminders may be distressing

Reconstruction Phase

- Renewed appreciation for:
 - life
 - relationships
- Reassessment of:
 - priorities
 - commitments
- Recognition of:
 - personal strengths

Reconstruction Phase

Recovery process for survivors is highly variable...

MOST → regain pre-disaster level of functioning

SOME → emerge at a **higher** level of functioning

Symbols and Rituals

Citizens understand the power of symbols...

- Symbols provide a way to express strong emotions/beliefs when written and spoken word fails.

Source: Flynn, 2003

Symbols and Rituals

Symbols...

- can unify across societal divisions.
- can be very culture-specific.

Source: Flynn, 2003

Long Term Consequences

Long-term Recovery...

Duration:

- The remainder of individuals' lives.

Reaction:

- The survivors are unable to recover
- Chronic health and functional problems

Long Term Sequelae

Long-term Recovery...

A new style and level of functioning:

- Resembles (but different from) the pre-disaster physical, social and emotional existence for individuals and for the community.