

DISASTER-PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTION FOR SURVIVORS

SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL MINI-COURSE

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Introduction to the Mini-Course Content

- CONTENT
 - I. Source
 - II. Application
 - III. Module Title List
- TRAINING POSTDISASTER COURSE
 - I. Organization of modules
 - II. Key issues

Introduction to the Mini-Course: Content Source

- The content of this course has been culled from the vast experience of many professionals who have recorded and researched their experiences while assisting in disaster events.
- It will present the needed self-instructional knowledge core to guide workers during the immediate post-disaster work.

Introduction to the Mini-Course: Content Application

- The content shared by many disaster professionals has allowed for the possibility of recognizing the universal cultural differences and similarities in some key areas of human reactions following a catastrophic event worldwide.

Introduction to the Mini-Course: Content Application

- Using this knowledge as a guide, disaster workers will serve survivors in different regions of the world with greater effectiveness by taking into consideration differences in culture, language, tradition, religion and beliefs.

Introduction to the Mini-Course: Content Application

- Although these modules will not present the organizational and administrative activities needed to establish a program of post-disaster psychosocial intervention, in their region, they will aid the psychosocial worker in developing an ***awareness that all his/her activities will be influenced by the type of program design in which he/she is assigned to assist.***

Introduction to the Mini-Course: Content Application

- Decisions regarding the “life - situation” of the survivors are in the hands of a separate emergency agencies.
- Changes instituted by emergency agencies that have a major impact on the mental health of the victim in need of psychosocial help may not be recognized by emergency workers.

LIST OF MODULE TITLE

- 1. INTRODUCTION / MODULE 1
 - 2 REACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS CHANGES THROUGH DISASTER PHASES
 - 3 CONSEQUENCES OF A CHANGED COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT
 - 4 KNOWLEDGED BASED, EVIDENCED-INFORMED CONCEPTS GUIDING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF POST-DISASTER REACTIONS AND BEHAVIOR
 - 5 POST-DISASTER ASSISTANCE TO SURVIVORS
 - 6 POST-DISASTER ISSUES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL WORKERS

Introduction to the Mini-Course:

Organization of the 6 Modules

- Each module addresses various focal areas of disaster assistance knowledge.
- Questions and Problems
 - Give you an opportunity to solve problems and put into practice the learned guidelines that are found in each each module.
- Workers assigned to assist the psychosocial recovery of survivors will be identified as *psychosocial workers*

Introduction to the Mini-Course: Organization of the 6 Modules

- The contents of the modules will be selected to answer basic questions generally voiced by workers.
- A number of areas have been selected to introduce a set of issues, experiences, and concepts under each heading which highlights the basic answers to the workers concern

Introduction to the Mini-Course: The Psychosocial Worker: Knowledge & Skills

What does a psychosocial worker need to know and be able to do in order to be capable of helping the survivors of a catastrophic disaster?

1. Enter disaster area and be identified
2. Observe and notice survivor's behavior
3. Understand crisis processes
4. Choose appropriate intervention per phase
5. Assist the survivor according to need
6. Continually monitor self-care

MODULE 1

What are some key issues in
all disaster programs?

What are some key issues in all disaster programs?

- During the past 20 years, increased *awareness, understanding, and recognition* of the emotional and psychological toll of disasters has led to the emergence of the psychosocial assistance response to survivors.

What are some key issues in all disaster programs?

- Although each disaster has unique characteristics, the universal human response to catastrophic change allows for the development of information and training that can be applied worldwide.

Key Issues

- a) Labeling Concepts
- b) Contributions of the Behavioral Sciences
- c) New roles for disaster psychosocial workers
- d) Socio-cultural/spiritual overview

Key Issues

a) Labeling Concepts

Labeling Concepts

- To describe a set of signs and symptoms the use of clinical nomenclature may not be appropriate in a disaster assistance setting.
 - Many manifestations of normative behavior after a trauma should not be confused with a pathological syndrome.

Labeling Concepts

It is imperative to remember:

- » **THE REACTION IS NORMAL FOR THE ABNORMAL SITUATION.**
- 🌀 This presents a challenge to workers in the post-disaster trauma work who need to communicate dysfunction (normative behavior post-disaster) without “labels” associated with clinical psychopathology.

Labeling Concepts

- Professionals in the mental health field are trained to organize observations along clinical categories, which serve as guidelines for intervention. In disasters the documenting of symptoms needs to be interpreted as post-disaster manifestations of distress, efforts of adaptation and coping.

Key Issues

- b) Advances in the Behavioral Sciences that have Contributed to our Knowledge of Trauma Reactions

Advances in Behavioral Sciences

- Knowledge of the relationship between psychic trauma and the different multilevel expressions of stress response is key to understanding a survivor's behavior. Important brain changes follow the impact of trauma.

Advances in Behavioral Sciences

Q. How did the evolving knowledge of variation in stress multifactor response influence the understanding of reactions following disaster events?

A. *It guided professionals to shift their focus of conceptualization and assistance intervention methodologies.*

Advances in Behavioral Sciences

Q. What concepts are used as guidelines to recognize post-disaster reactions?

**A. All reactions result from bio-
psychosocial-cultural/spiritual impact
and reestablishing/reconstructive
efforts.**

Advances in Behavioral Sciences

What Key areas of Knowledge will help:

- Stressor-stress response
- Crisis reactions
- Coping mechanisms
- Resiliency
- Support networks
- Loss and bereavement processes
- Adaptation Behavior

Advances in Behavioral Sciences

- The emergence of the bio-psycho-sociocultural system perspective, which attempts to identify the mechanisms through which psychosocial stress affect behavior, has offered new guidelines to understand post-disaster behavior and uses many therapeutic modalities including:
 - psychological first aid, crisis intervention, medication, counseling, education, and group work.

Advances in Behavioral Sciences

The stressor-response system:

- A fundamental genetic system serving the survival needs of the individual.
- Activates arousal and response to outside physical and psychosocial stimulus and to internalized signs of danger.
 - Memory systems are intricately involved in assisting this process.
 - The cognitive and affective system respond and the functions of identification/evaluation to danger are set into motion--brain is “wired for these” functions.

Key Issues

c) New Roles for Psychosocial Disaster Workers

What are the New Roles for Psychosocial Disaster Workers?

Psychosocial workers:

- a) Need to expand their understanding of how multi-variant circumstances unleashed by the traumatic event impact the individual.
- b) Must devise a new interceptive approach to develop therapeutic techniques that take all these new concepts into account.
 - This function and role shift will influence his/her role as a member of the disaster team.

New Roles for Psychosocial Disaster Workers

- In acquiring this novel role the worker will incorporate a new body of knowledge.
- This knowledge includes an awareness of the shifting and changing reactions of individuals through time and relocation sites where they will congregate looking for safety, food and shelter.

New Roles for Psychosocial Disaster Workers

The nature and pace of the work changes continually as a result of:

1. The sequence of emotional and coping processes.
2. The rate of recovery in the community as it reorganizes post-disaster.
 - ⊙ The demands for action and assistance gradually lessen in intensity and become more protracted.

The Psychosocial Disaster Worker

- a) Knowledge
- b) Attitude
- c) Skills

The Psychosocial Disaster Worker: KNOWLEDGE

- Commonality with professional knowledge
- Different and new professional function
- Shifting Rhythm and schedule of work
- Evolution in expectations and attitudes of non-mental disaster workers
- Professional boundaries and guidelines confusing
- Disaster- non-mental health workers-responsibilities different from those of mental health workers

The Psychosocial Disaster Worker:

ATTITUDE

- Belief that survivors are reacting normally to very abnormal situations.
 - Responses are, in most cases, expressions of one's attempts to cope.
- Willingness to reach out to survivors.
 - Outreach is an integral part of all efforts to find, make contact with, and assist survivors.

The Psychosocial Disaster Worker:

ATTITUDE

- Operate in a way that minimizes the survivor's dependence [on the worker].
- Comfortable acceptance of the possibility of rejection or skepticism by the survivor.
- Willingness to accept that survivors may not consider themselves in need of mental health services and may not seek out such services as a result.

The Psychosocial Disaster Worker:

SKILLS

Ability to:

- feel comfortable helping a survivor with practical concrete assistance to obtain resources.
- adapt the worker's usual behavior to the cultural values and beliefs of the survivor.
 - constantly aware of the details regarding social, traditional, and/or religious practice.

The Psychosocial Disaster Worker: SKILLS

Skills/Capacity to:

- set aside usual methods of classifying emotions and behaviors according to clinical categories or mental health labels.
- resist the impulse to promise to supply all the needs of survivors, which would necessitate more resources and for a longer duration than feasible through the recovery program.

The Psychosocial Disaster Worker: SKILLS

Skills/Capacity to:

- assist survivors in understanding the scope and limits of the post-disaster psychosocial program while acknowledging their impatience or anger with the slow pace of bureaucracy.
- refrain from identifying with the survivor's emotions so as not to lose objectivity and unwittingly adversely affect the survivor's perceptions of the reality stemming from the trauma.



Key Issue

Culture

SOCIO-CULTURAL



How much should a worker know about the influence of culture on post disaster reactions, how to interpret them and how to help?

Socio-Cultural/Spiritual Issues

- Content based on experience and knowledge should be incorporated into all the activities, depending on the region and the specific population affected by the disaster.

Socio-Cultural/Spiritual Issues

- Workers bring knowledge, attitudes and skills obtained in their previous experiences, coupled with their own cultural/spiritual background.
- These characteristics strongly influence their:
 - communication style
 - approach to establish relationships
 - perceptions of survivors' response.

Cross-cultural Factors in Post-disaster Intervention

- Assisting and participating in post-trauma situations affecting multicultural groups demands knowledge of cultural response by individuals of different origins.

Cross-cultural Factors in Post-disaster Intervention

- Knowledge, attitude and skills working with survivors of different cultures demands awareness of the variables that should be recognized and sorted out.
 - stress response versus psychopathology.

Cross-cultural Factors in Post-disaster Intervention

- Ascribing a value to the behavior where cultural factors play a determining role is a difficult area to analyze.
 - The construct of expressed emotions is culturally determined.
- The complex expression of emotions, attitude and behavior can represent cultural variables that express dimensions of trauma response.

Cross-cultural Factors in Post-disaster Intervention

- Characteristics of the families affected will play a role in the therapeutic relation:
 - ethnicity
 - migrant status
 - acculturation levels
 - socio economic strata,
 - value systems
 - tradition accepting misfortune and trauma

Cross-cultural Factors in Post-disaster Intervention

- Family and Kinship Network
 - variations in effectiveness
- Their scope of involvement does not imply that within some communities the pattern of kinship structure is excluded.
 - The family has a more delimited role, acting primarily in a supportive fashion.

Cross-cultural Factors in Post-disaster Intervention

- Family and Kinship Network
 - variations in effectiveness
- There would be variations along the lines of rural-urban differences or ethnic groups.
- In large part, this is due to less differentiation of family allegiances found among worldwide regions.

Cross-cultural Factors in Post-disaster Intervention

- Family and Kinship Network
 - variations in effectiveness
- In many parts of the world, the family and kinship structure tends to be a multipurpose organization.
 - It becomes involved in a wide scope of activities.
 - Warning, search and rescue, aid to survivors, identification and burial of the dead, as well as restoration of services.

Culture

- Culture influences how individuals perceive and interpret traumatic events.
- Culture influences how they, their families, and their communities respond.



Cultural Groups: Disaster Stressors

- **Immigration status**
- **Language difficulties**
- **Lack of information**
- **Lack of health insurance**

Cultural Groups: Disaster Stressors

- **Discrimination**
- **Difficulty accessing
disaster services**
- **Lack of financial
resources**

Cultural Differences in Response

Cultural Differences

Cultural differences:

- Definition of disaster
- Conceptualization of disaster
- Expression of grief
- Acceptance of help
- Use of support
- Role of faith

Cultural Differences: Access to Behavioral Health Services

- **Distrust of government programs**
- **Inconvenient location**
- **Stigma toward mental health**
- **Cultural differences in response to loss**

Cultural Competence Applied to Psychosocial Workers

In disaster assistance, *cultural competence* is the ability of counseling, education, and outreach workers to understand and respond effectively to the cultural and linguistic needs of individuals and families most affected by a disaster.

Source: Project Liberty, 2002

Disaster Responders: Culturally Competent Conduct

- Know the culture
- Self-educate about culturally-specific behaviors
- Rely on members of the community for information

Disaster Responders: Culturally Competent Conduct

- **Understand** the cultural expression of distress
- **Respect** the need for ritual and customs
- **Encourage** healthy coping

Disaster Responders: Culturally Competent Conduct

- Be alert to personal cultural biases
- Be respectful and well informed
- Admit personal limitations to understanding culture

Culture defines reactions
to disasters
and guides effective
response.

Guiding Principles for Cultural Competence in Disaster Programs

Source: *Developing Cultural Competence in Disaster Mental Health Programs: Guiding Principles and Recommendations*. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (2003).

Guiding Principles for Cultural Competence in Disaster Programs

- **Principle 1:** Recognize the importance of culture and respect diversity.
- **Principle 2:** Maintain a current profile of the cultural composition of the community.
- **Principle 3:** Recruit disaster workers who are representative of the community or service area.

Guiding Principles for Cultural Competence in Disaster Programs

- **Principle 4:** Provide ongoing cultural competence training to disaster mental health staff.
- **Principle 5:** Ensure that services are accessible, appropriate and equitable.
- **Principle 6:** Recognize the role of help-seeking behaviors, customs and traditions, and natural support network.

Guiding Principles for Cultural Competence in Disaster Programs

- **Principle 7:** Involve as “cultural brokers” community leaders and organizations representing diverse cultural groups.
- **Principle 8:** Ensure that services and information are culturally and linguistically competent.
- **Principle 9:** Assess and evaluate the program’s level of cultural competence.