Community Emergency Response Team

Contra Costa CERT Coalition

Disaster Psychology

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Community Emergency Response Team

- Personal safety is ALWAYS the number one priority
- Show up prepared
  - Wear appropriate clothing and footwear, have WATER
  - Wear PPE – your personal protective equipment …gloves, helmet, goggles, mask, boots, etc.
  - Have at least one communications device: cell, radio, etc.
- Work as a team
- Size-up - maintain situational awareness
- The CERT goal is to do the
  - **Greatest Good for the Greatest Number**
- *Hope for the best but plan for the worst!*

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Unit Objectives

- Understand disaster trauma for survivors and rescuers, including CERT volunteers
- List steps to take for personal and team well-being
- Demonstrate key steps to apply when providing aid to someone with survivor's trauma

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Disaster Psychology

- Many responders find their experiences exhilarating, meaningful and life-enhancing
- But for some, and for many victims, their experiences are stressful, traumatic or difficult, and may have long-term adverse consequences

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What is Trauma?

- A response to a direct, personal experience of an event happening to you or someone else
- Actual or potential death
- Serious injury
- Actual or threatened violence
- Destruction of homes, neighborhood, or valued possessions
- Loss of contact with family or close relationships

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The Nature of Disasters and Emergencies

- Can be completely disruptive of normal life
- Unexpected
- Lots of unusual things happening
- Lots of unknowns
- Events unfold unpredictably
- Often, limited specific preparation



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The Five F's

- **Freeze:** "Stop, look, and listen," or be on guard and watchful
- **Flight:** Flee
- **Fight:** Attempt to combat the threat
- **Fright:** Tonic immobility when in contact with a predator, or playing dead
- **Faint:** Fear-induced fainting

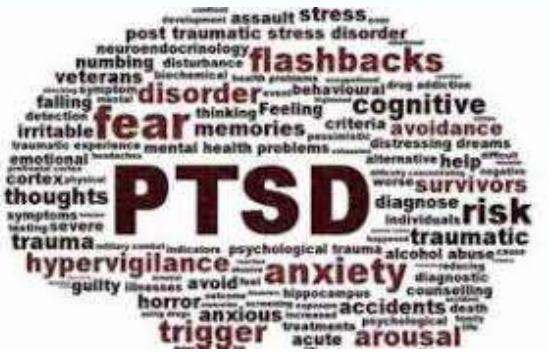


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Psychological Symptoms of Trauma

- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Spiritual



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Physiological Symptoms of Trauma

- Loss of appetite
- Headaches or chest pain
- Diarrhea, stomach pain, or nausea
- Increase in drug consumption
- Hyperactivity
- Nightmares
- Insomnia
- Fatigue



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Team Well-Being

- Actions can be taken before, during, and after an incident to help manage emotional impact of disaster response work
- Knowing possible psychological and physiological symptoms of disaster trauma helps manage impact
- Learn to manage stress:
  - CERT volunteers for themselves
  - CERT leaders during response



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How to Reduce Stress

- Get enough sleep
- Exercise regularly
- Eat a balanced diet
- Balance work, play, and rest
- Allow yourself to receive as well as give
- Connect with others
- Use spiritual resources



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Take Care of Yourself

- Be aware of trauma that can follow a disaster
- Explain to family members and friends what you need:
  - Listen when you want to talk
  - Don't force yourself to talk until you are ready

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Self-Care Tool Box

- This activity provides you with the opportunity to outline a number of self-care tools you can use before and during a crisis so that you are ready to respond during an emergency
- Complete this exercise individually and at your own pace. When everyone has finished, you will have the opportunity to share your responses with the class if you would like

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Self-Care Tool Box

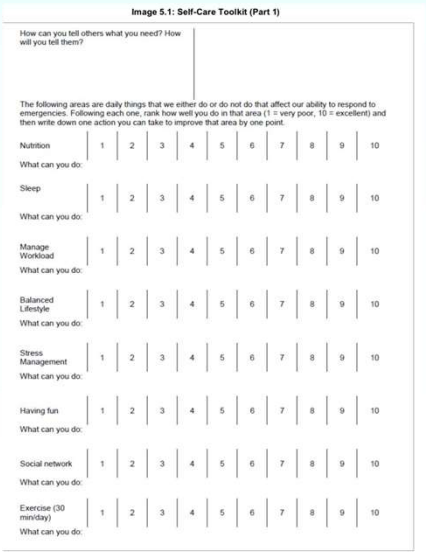


Image 5.1: Self-Care Toolkit (Part 1)

How can you tell others what you need? How will you tell them?

The following areas are daily things that we either do or do not do that affect our ability to respond to emergencies. Following each one, rank how well you do in that area (1 = very poor, 10 = excellent) and then write down one action you can take to improve that area by one point.

Nutrition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
What can you do:										
Sleep	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
What can you do:										
Manage Workload	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
What can you do:										
Balanced Lifestyle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
What can you do:										
Stress Management	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
What can you do:										
Having fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
What can you do:										
Social network	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
What can you do:										
Exercise (30 min/day)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
What can you do:										

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How Team Leaders Reduce Stress

- Brief CERT personnel beforehand
- Remember CERT is a team
- Rest and regroup
- Take breaks away from the incident site
- Establish a culture of acceptance



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How Team Leaders Reduce Stress

- Eat properly, stay hydrated
- Be aware of changes in teammates
- Rotate teams and duties
- Phase out workers gradually
- Defuse after shift

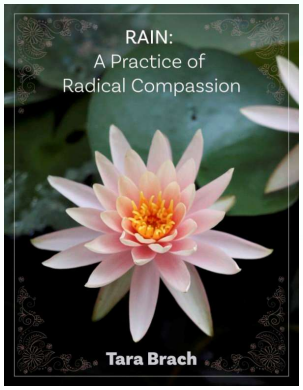


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RAIN: A Practice of Radical Compassion

The acronym RAIN is an easy-to-remember tool for bringing mindfulness and compassion to emotional difficulty.

- **R**ecognize what is going on
- **A**llow the experience to be there, just as it is
- **I**nvestigate with interest and care
- **N**urture with self-compassion

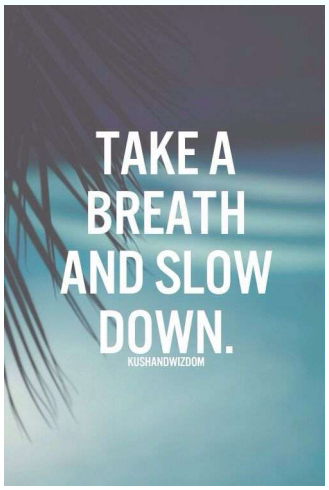


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S T O P

- Practice **STOP** when you notice you are getting anxious

- **Stop** what you're doing and take a moment to be still
- **Take** a few deep breaths and just be aware that you're breathing
- **Observe** any sensations in your body, thoughts in your mind, emotions in your heart
- **Pause** to come back to your breath, then proceed with your day with greater calm



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Emotional Phases of a Crisis

- Pre-Disaster
- Impact
- Heroic
- Honeymoon
- Disillusionment
- Reconstruction



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Traumatic Crisis

- A traumatic crisis is an event experienced or witnessed in which people's ability to cope is overwhelmed by:
  - Actual or potential death or injury to self or others
  - Serious injury
  - Destruction of their homes, neighborhood, or value possessions
  - Loss of contact with family or close friends

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Effects of Traumatic Stress

- Traumatic stress may affect:
  - Cognitive functioning (thinking/behavior)
  - Physical health
  - Interpersonal relationships



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Mediating Factors

- Prior experience with a similar event
- Intensity of disruption
- Individual feelings about event
- Emotional resources of individual
- Length of time since event

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Stabilizing Survivors

- Assess survivors for injury or shock
- Get uninjured people to help
- Provide support by listening and empathizing
- Help survivors connect with natural support systems



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Listen, Protect, Connect

- Listen to survivors and pay attention to what they say
- Help survivors feel protected by providing support
- Connect survivors to friends and loved ones



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How to Be an Empathetic Listener

- Put yourself in the speaker's shoes
- Listen for meaning, not just words
- Pay attention to nonverbal communication
- Paraphrase the speaker



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What Not to Say

- "I understand "
- "Don't feel bad "
- "You're strong "
- "You'll get through this "
- "Don't cry "
- "It's God's will "
- "It could be worse "
- "At least you still have..."
- "Everything will be okay"

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Say This Instead

- "I'm sorry for your pain "
- "I'm so sorry this has happened "
- "Is it all right if I help you with…?"
- "I can't imagine what this is like for you "
- "What do you need?"

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Take Care of Your Team

- CERT volunteers will experience a variety of feelings and emotions during their service
- Naming your emotions to support each other
- Preparation and self-care are important



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Managing the Death Scene

- Cover the body; treat it with respect
- Follow local laws and protocols
- Talk with local authorities



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The Road to Recovery

Those survivors who could find something good that came out of the experience soon after it happened –

"I realized how much I loved my family"

"I decided that life was too short not to follow my dreams"

– had made a better recovery at the time of the follow-up interview.



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Unit Summary

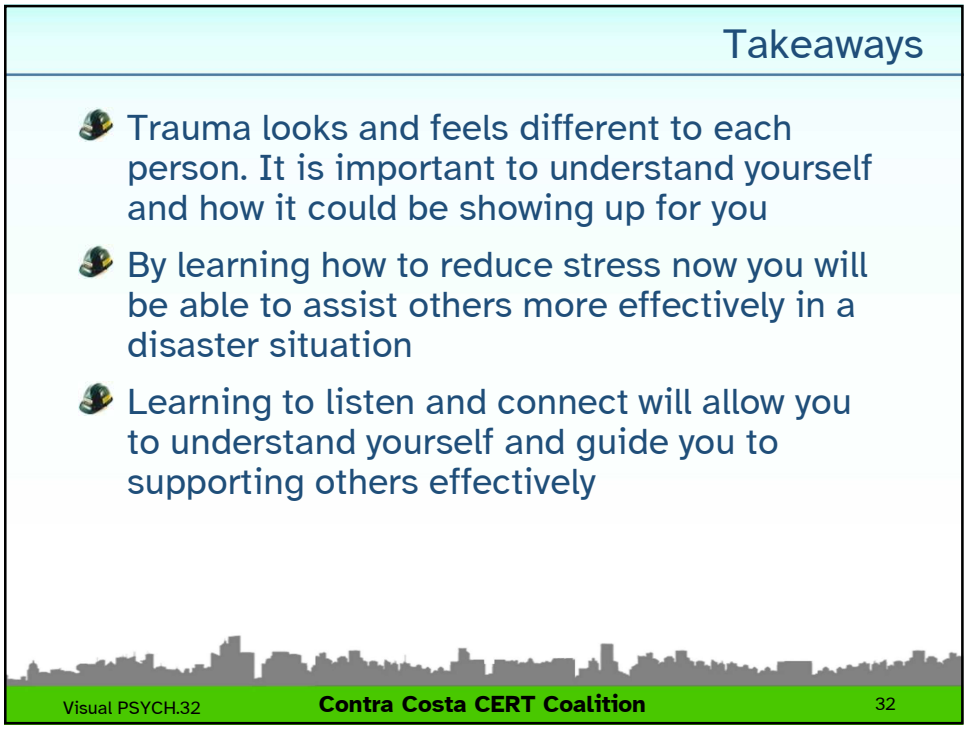
- Prepare yourself, as rescues may be unpleasant and uncomfortable
- Know the psychological and physiological symptoms of trauma
- Understand the six emotional phases of a disaster
- Take steps to reduce stress, which affects cognition, health, and interactions
- Stabilize individuals
- Listen, protect, and connect to support survivors
- Be an empathetic listener

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Questions ?



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Takeaways
Trauma looks and feels different to each person. It is important to understand yourself and how it could be showing up for you
By learning how to reduce stress now you will be able to assist others more effectively in a disaster situation
Learning to listen and connect will allow you to understand yourself and guide you to supporting others effectively
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