



Emotional First Aid



Giving emotional support to people immediately after a crisis occurs is extremely important. This document covers several key recommendations to use as you offer emotional first aid to support someone going through extremely stressful situations.

Emotional First Aid

Immediate, short-term help, offered in an emergency to affected people, using different strategies to offer them the best possible support.



Objectives: Help the person...

- ♥ Face the crisis, reestablish control over their feelings and be able to face reality.
- ♥ Provide support, making it easier for the person to feel accompanied, listened to and understood.
- ♥ Express their feelings and negative emotions such as fear, sadness, anguish or anger.
- ♥ Reduce injuries or deaths by preventing assaults.
- ♥ With information on helpful resources and provide guidance on what to do and how to do it.

Emotional First Aid

Basic Principles:

- ✓ Give a firm and respectful treatment
- ✓ Protect the person to avoid any damage
- ✓ Establish appropriate emotional and physical contact
- ✓ Dialogue: inform, listen, invite to speak
- ✓ Create space for the expression of emotions
- ✓ Accept without judging feelings or reactions
- ✓ Assess their abilities (orientation and emotional state)
- ✓ Offer information
- ✓ Provide options - concrete and stimulating actions
- ✓ Follow up: what happened to the person afterwards
- ✓ Accept our own limitations



What to do



- ✓ Find a quiet place to talk.
- ✓ Respect privacy and confidentiality.
- ✓ Stand close to the person, keeping the appropriate distance according to their age, gender and culture.
- ✓ Show that you are listening to them.
- ✓ Be patient and stay calm.
- ✓ Offer concrete and honest information.
- ✓ Give information in an understandable way.
- ✓ Let them know that you understand how they feel and that you are sorry for what happened to them.
- ✓ Let her know that you recognize her strengths and how she is helping herself.
- ✓ Leave spaces for silence.

What Not To Do



- Do not pressure the person to tell their story
- Do not interrupt or rush them while they are talking
- Do not touch them if you are not sure that it is appropriate
- Do not judge their actions, or feelings
- Do not say things like "You shouldn't feel this way," "You should feel lucky to survive"
- Do not tell someone else's story or talk about your own problems
- Do not make false promises or false reassuring arguments
- Do not think or act as if you have to solve all of the person's problems for them
- Do not take away your feeling of being able to take care of yourself
- Do not talk about other people in negative terms.