Psychological First Aid

Supporting staff before, during, and in the aftermath of crisis events

May 5, 2020
Welcome
Your participant package

- Your Participant Guide includes space for writing notes and reflections.
- Make sure you’re following along in your participant guide for additional information/context to the discussion.
- Please speak up if you’re not sure where to follow along in the guide vs the PowerPoint.
What we’ll be discussing

- Our common experience
- History of PFA
- The Psychosocial aspect of PFA
- Understanding PFA
- Providing PFA
- Scenario
- Health footprint of this pandemic
- Self-care
What are your thoughts as you see this image?
Goals of PFA training

- Share knowledge & skills
- Build confidence
- Build capacity
History of PFA
Not that old.....

- Designed to reduce PTSD by Dep’t of Veteran Affairs (2006)
- Emerged as a mainstay for early psychological intervention
- Now the first, and most favoured, early intervention approach
- Many models and resources available
Psychosocial support means:

- helping individuals meet their everyday emotional/social needs
- anyone can provide psychosocial support
- recognizing that everyone has psychosocial needs

within the pandemic experience, early support is critical
Stepped Care Model

Timing of Interventions & Level of Needs

**IMPACT**
- Everyone Affected
  - (several months)

**RESPONSE**
- Many People
  - (several months to years)

**RECOVERY**
- Some People
  - (short-term, months to years)

- Few People
  - (long-term, several years)

**Information**
- Regular communication, attending to basic needs, systems & services navigation, coping/calming skills, harm reduction.

**Community & Family Supports**
- Positive coping skills. Use of technology to ensure family & social connections, community engagement, & healing activities. (e.g., phone, text, online supports)

**Focused Support**
- Facilitated self-help, grief & loss support, cultural healing practices, support for change & loss.
  - * Individual, family, or group intervention non-specialized supports.

**Treatment**
- Specialized services (e.g., professional mental health treatment, referral-based support). Utilize current addiction & mental health supports, development of new specialized pandemic clinical services.


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5 essential elements

World-wide panel of experts identified these elements as essential to helping respond & recover from a disaster

- Safety
- Calm
- Self & Community Efficacy
- Hope
- Connectedness

Hobfoll et al., 2007
What is Psychological First Aid?
Purpose of PFA

- Reduce stress
- Assist with current needs
- Provide coping strategies
- Help find balance and connect people with spiritual, social, physical, and emotional support
What has helped you be resilient during this pandemic?
PFA is:

- Non-intrusive, supportive and practical assistance
- Identifying needs and concerns
- Listening but not pressuring to talk
- Helping connect to information, services & social supports
- Comforting
PFA is not:

- Something only professionals can do
- Professional counselling
- “Psychological debriefing”
- Pressuring people to tell you their feelings and reactions
What about your current AHS role positions you well to support PFA?
Providing PFA
You are already skilled

Think about a time when you successfully stepped in to help someone in crisis.

What made what you did or said help?
PFA is effective because:

- It helps people:
  - Feel safe, connected to others, calm and hopeful
  - Have access to social, physical and emotional support
  - Feel able to help themselves
PFA Action Principles

- Adaptable to local context
- Reflect best practices on how to support staff
Prepare

- Be aware of what supports are available
Look

- Adapt to consider the person’s organizational and personal culture
- Serious distress reactions require additional support
Listen

- Ask about needs & concerns
- Help the individual to feel calm
- Respect safety, dignity and rights

PFA Action Principles

PREPARE

LOOK

LINK

LISTEN
Link

- Match understandable and correct supports available to what you’ve heard and discussed
- Help people to help themselves and to regain control of their situation
# Where PFA is applicable

## Psychological First Aid Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEALTHY</th>
<th>REACTING</th>
<th>INJURED</th>
<th>ILL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Normal fluctuations in mood</td>
<td>• Nervousness, irritability, sadness</td>
<td>• Anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness</td>
<td>• Excessive anxiety, easily enraged, depressed mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Normal sleep patterns</td>
<td>• Trouble sleeping</td>
<td>• Restless or disturbed sleep</td>
<td>• Unable to fall or stay asleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physically well, full of energy</td>
<td>• Tired/low energy, muscle tension, headaches</td>
<td>• Fatigue, aches and pains</td>
<td>• Exhaustion, physical illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consistent performance</td>
<td>• Procrastination</td>
<td>• Decreased performance, presentism</td>
<td>• Unable to perform duties, absenteeism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social activity</td>
<td>• Decreased social activity</td>
<td>• Social avoidance or withdrawal</td>
<td>• Isolation, avoiding social events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Symptoms
- MyLearningLink courses
- Workplace supports
- Not Myself Today
- Respect in the Workplace
- Prevention of Violence

### Professional assistance: AHS mental health support
- EFAP: 1-877-273-3134
- Provincial distress line: 1-877-273-3134
- Health Link: 811
- Your family physician, psychologist, psychiatrist and counsellor
- EFAP: 1-877-273-3134

### Professional assistance: WCB (Advisor)
- Ability Advisor
- Crisis Management Services

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Making it real
Putting all this into action

Scenario
Prepare

- Be aware of what supports are available
Case Scenario: Debrief

Describe *one thing* of interest that came up in your group discussion.
Prepare

- First, prepare yourself to respond
- Gather as much information as possible
- Have AHS website and pandemic resources handout with you
- Know ahead of time what supports are currently available and how to access these supports
- Identify mental wellness resources and contacts
Look

- Adapt to consider the person’s organizational and personal culture
- Serious distress reactions require additional support
Describe one thing of interest that came up in your group discussion.
Look

- Pay attention to emotional and stress reactions and coping strategies
- Model healthy responses by remaining calm and helpful
- Be visible in the virtual environment (camera)
- Ensure the contact is not intrusive or disruptive
- Help the person become physically comfortable
Listen

Your goal is to:

- reduce distress
- assist with current needs
- promote adaptive functioning

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Case Scenario: Debrief

Describe one thing of interest that came up in your group discussion.
Listen

- Let the person speak without interruption and tell you how you can help
- Silence is ok
- Answer questions
- If you don’t know the answer – find accurate information
- Just being present in a supportive and calming way can help
When emotions are high

- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Unable to process information
- Unable to focus

Reassurance is essential to stabilizing emotions
Listen

What strategies have you used in the past?
The biggest communication problem is we do not listen to understand

We listen to reply

Stephen R. Covey
Link

- Match understandable and correct supports available to what you’ve heard and discussed
- Help people to help themselves and to regain control of their situation
Case Scenario: Debrief

Describe *one thing* of interest that came up in your group discussion.
Link

- Link the right resources to the most important issues
- Have ready a list of contacts for emotional and practical supports
- Express your gratitude that they shared their experience
Helping responsibly

- Encourage positive coping strategies
- Give accurate information
- Answer questions
- Focus discussion on problem-solving
Health footprint of this pandemic
Healthcare Infrastructure & the Pandemic

PFA support will be needed beyond the initial pandemic impact.
Self-care
YOU CAN'T POUR FROM AN EMPTY CUP. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
Self-checks

What in-the-moment self-care actions are most helpful for you?
Before responding....

Assess what might impact your ability to be effective as a PFA provider:

- Personal life challenges
- Personal or family commitments taking your attention
- Reductions in physical, emotional, mental and/or spiritual well-being
Don’t forget

You:
- deserve a work-life balance
- can reach out for peer support
- have and use a self-care plan
- have a Manager and/or co-workers you can consult with
Ongoing support

- Community of Practice
- Resilience, wellness & mental health resources