

34 Psychological first aid

Help to meet immediate needs

- ➔ Take the affected person to a safe place.
- ➔ Provide physical first aid if needed.
- ➔ Shield the person from bystanders/people looking – make sure they are covered i.e. if clothes are torn.
- ➔ Offer something to eat/drink.
- ➔ Ask if they are warm enough and offer a blanket.
- ➔ Ask whether or not they need anything for themselves or their children.
- ➔ If they are tired, provide a place to rest.
- ➔ If necessary, take a walk with the person if they are upset or agitated.

Listen

- ➔ Actively concentrate on what the affected person says.
- ➔ Do not interrupt or try to assure them that everything will be all right.
- ➔ Make frequent eye contact and ensure that your body language signals that you are listening.
- ➔ Gently touch the hand or shoulder of the affected person, if appropriate.
- ➔ Take time to listen when people describe what happened. Telling their story will help people understand and eventually accept the event.

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Accept any feeling that the individual expresses

- ➔ Natural responses to a disaster or critical event include feelings:
 - Anxiety, grief, guilt and anger.
 - Joy at having survived without injury.
 - Shame at escaping injury when others were injured.
 - Anger towards a friend or relative who was injured.
- ➔ You should stay relaxed and let the affected person know that the feeling is understandable.

Assist with next steps

- ➔ Ask the affected person if he/she has a place to go; if not, help him/her find shelter.
- ➔ Ask the affected person if he/she has someone to look after him/her or someone to talk to
- ➔ If not, assist in establishing contact with loved ones or find a place where the person may be taken care of.
- ➔ Provide factual information about where and how the affected person can seek specific resources that can be helpful to him/her.