

Our Purpose is NOT to provide professional counseling or therapy

During an emergency the Emotional Support Team works with the Medical Team & others to provide emotional support in a compassionate and helpful manner. We are guided by the principles of Psychological First Aid

- Enhance immediate & ongoing sense of safety and emotional comfort
- Stabilize: calm and orient emotionally overwhelmed or confused individuals
- Offer practical assistance to meet most immediate needs, provide information, if needed, on normal stress response & coping skills
- Link individual to collaborative services: medical, housing, outside community resources, mental health counseling, with the assistance of VMA Service Coordinator
- Follow up with individual to provide ongoing support to those in need

Typical emotional responses to traumatic events

- Shock and Denial: hard time accepting reality
- Fear: of the future, possible negative outcomes
- Sadness & Grief: particularly if there has been a loss of loved one, a pet, or loss of home/valuables
- Anger & Irritability: loss of control, lack of stability
- Helplessness: feeling vulnerable, confused, helpless
- Guilt & Shame; feeling they didn't do enough to prepare or prevent the situation, fear of loss of control.

Possible Physiological symptoms as a result of trauma/emotional distress:

- Immediate: headache, chest pain, diarrhea, nausea, rapid heartbeat or breathing, trembling
- Longer Term: loss of appetite, headaches, nightmares, insomnia, fatigue, low energy, poor concentration, easily startled, aches & pains

Process:

- Introduce ourselves, identify ourselves as part of emotional support team, get residents name and how they wish to be addressed, ask if it's Ok before any physical contact
- Obtain the name & phone number of contact person, relationship to resident, permission to contact, if needed and appropriate for the circumstances
- Stay near the person but be respectful of their space & cultural norms
- Offer comfort, empathy, support
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings and current specific needs or concerns, help them prioritize
- Reassure them that their confidentiality will be respected.
- Use breathing, relaxation, grounding techniques if appropriate

You may encounter people who direct their anger and frustration toward you. If this occurs, try to remain calm and reassuring. If they indicate the potential for violence or express any thoughts of hurting themselves or others, seek immediate help from security, if available, or other team members for assistance.

Follow up with resident as needed after the first 72hrs.

Review Positive Coping Strategies with resident.

- Get rest, but avoid sleeping too much
- Try to get back to normal routines, eat reg meals etc. take care of yourself
- Connect with family or other community members such as churches or clubs, avoid isolating
- Talk with people you trust about what you're feeling
- Do relaxing activities: music, reading, walking, physical activities
- Get involved in a support group
- Seek counseling: If your stress reaction is interfering with your ability to function: especially if symptoms persist, such as anxiety, extreme fear, flashbacks, avoiding things that remind you of the traumatic event, self-isolating, having suicidal thoughts.