

Loving Others



through Crisis





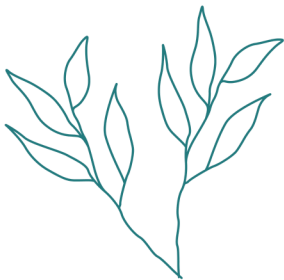
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this booklet for educational purposes
and is not to be sold



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INTRODUCTION



Who is this booklet for?

After the experiences of many of our YWAM volunteers and teams responding to the 2015 refugee crisis, we realised our volunteers need a better understanding of trauma and how to care for traumatised people as well as for themselves so that they can be resilient and healthy in their own lives while being a healing part of the journey for those in crisis.

We recommend bases, teams and volunteers who minister to people in crisis or trauma to read through this and our other resources provided to have a basic understanding of trauma-informed care. Included in this booklet is a Sources page for further education.

If you have questions about how you can better serve those in crisis, please contact us at mcrt.ywameurope@gmail.com



YWAM Ukraine Care Team &
YWAM Europe Member Care Resource Team

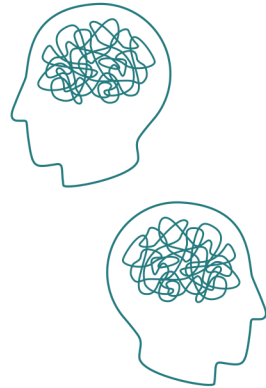


UNDERSTANDING CRISIS & TRAUMA

CRISIS / CRITICAL INCIDENT :

an overwhelming, short-term event or circumstance that causes an internal experience of distress, disorganisation and anxiety that is beyond one's natural abilities to cope. As a result, the person in crisis may feel confused, vulnerable, anxious, afraid, angry, guilty, hopeless and helpless.

- A crisis can be foreseen or unexpected; personal or communal (or global).
- An on-going crisis occurs when the circumstances are prolonged (i.e. war)



TRAUMA : a personal response to a distressing event that disrupts a person's feeling of safety. Traumatic events tend to be sudden and unpredictable and often include a real or perceived threat to life (either their own life or someone near them). Trauma is a subjective experience. A group of people may experience a critical incident, but not everyone will be traumatised by that event.



UNDERSTANDING CRISIS & TRAUMA



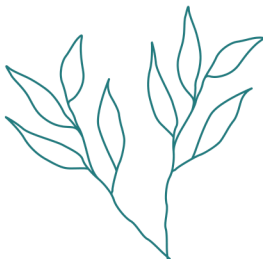
What happens to us when we experience a traumatic event ?

During a traumatic event, our body's stress response is preparing us to survive a threat by fight, flight or freeze. Adrenaline levels spike and can make our hands shake, our breathing fast and shallow, our heart rate accelerate, etc. The psychological impact of the event may cause this stress response to activate even after we are in a safe place.

The signs and symptoms of traumatic stress may last a few days, weeks, months, or even longer. The stress reactions can pass more quickly with the understanding and support of loved ones. However, sometimes, a traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counsellor may be needed.

To learn more about typical responses to traumatic stress, read the "Signs & Symptoms of Traumatic Stress" booklet. This resource shows the common signs of traumatic stress for adults, adolescents and children.

We recommend you familiarise yourself with the Signs & Symptoms of Traumatic Stress so that you can help those in crisis understand that what they are feeling are normal responses to abnormal situations.





GROUNDING. DEFUSING & DE-ESCALATING

Traumatic Stress causes intense and often overwhelming emotions and responses. **Grounding, Defusing & De-escalating** are all techniques used to help traumatised people feel present, safe and in control of themselves.

With all of these techniques, it's important to remember that you are not a professional and your safety is priority. If the situation has become dangerous, get yourself and those you are responsible for to safety and get help.



GROUNDING : After a traumatic event, many can find themselves experiencing shock, flashbacks or having their stress response triggered by sights, sounds, etc that makes their brain believe they are in danger even if they are safe. Grounding is a term used to describe any technique used to help bring the person back to the present moment.

DEFUSING : It's important to remember that people in crisis often do not have the resources to cope with new stressors. This can lead to emotional explosions. Defusing techniques help take the fuse out of an emotional "bomb" and help the person regain control over him/herself.



DE-ESCALATING : Sometimes the emotional explosions seemingly come from nowhere. If it is too late to defuse, then de-escalation can help reduce the intensity of emotions that could potentially lead to harm or conflict.

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

If you are ministering to someone who is in shock or is experiencing an intense emotional response (i.e. panic), these simple techniques can help them come back to the present moment. You can use one or a combination of the following. We suggest having a grounding "Tool Kit" on hand that includes items such as a fidget toy, peppermint oil, water, sour candy, a fan, etc.

BELLY BREATHING : By focusing on deep breaths that expand the stomach, the person can calm their heart rate. It's best if you do the technique with them and have them mirror you

- Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach
- Inhale through the nose (into the stomach) slowly for 4 seconds; hold for 4 seconds, and exhale slowly out of the mouth for 4+ seconds. Repeat the breaths 3-5 times.



YAWN : Yawning engages a rest response in the nervous system.

Have the person mirror you as you do the following steps

- Sit or stand in a comfortable position
- Gently massage your jaw joints and slowly open your mouth wide while breathing in
- Yawn and exhale with audible force



BUTTERFLY HUG : This self-hug is self-soothing and triggers a relaxation response in the nervous system. Have the person mirror you as you do this

- Cross arms over chest with right hand over heart
- Alternating hands, gently tap your chest while you slow down your breathing. Do this for 30 seconds to 2 minutes



5-4-3-2-1 : This technique helps the person come back to the present moment by focusing on each sense. Encourage them to notice small details as you walk them through the questions.

- What are **5** things you can **see**? (patterns, colours, light, objects, etc)
- What are **4** things you can **feel**? (fabric on skin, heat/cold, textures, etc)
- What are **3** things you can **hear**? (distant traffic, tapping foot, etc)
- What are **2** things you can **smell**?
- What's **1** thing you can **taste**?



DEFUSING

Defusing can help avoid escalation of volatile outbursts. It gives people an opportunity to talk about what they are experiencing and feeling, thus making it easier to manage their mental & emotional health. Defusing during on-going crisis is a chance to start processing what has been going on inside them. When we defuse, we want to normalise their reactions, connect them to resources and teach them healthy coping strategies. The SAFER model (developed by Mitchell & Everly) is a great guideline to meet someone where they are and support and care for them on their journey.

S

Stabilise : If the person is in shock, use the grounding techniques to bring them back to the present. Assess and meet any immediate needs such as medical, food, water, bathroom, clothes, etc.

A

Acknowledge the crisis : Give the person an opportunity to share their story and experiences. Show them that you are listening by asking questions and reflecting back what you hear.

F

Facilitate understanding : Reduce their feelings of distress by normalising their emotional responses. A helpful phrase could be "You are responding normally to an abnormal situation." Share with them the Common Signs & Symptoms of Traumatic Stress.

E

Encourage effective coping : Ask the person, "What do you need most right now?" and then help them with it. Teach them healthy coping strategies like the examples listed in the Self-Recovery Ideas document. Encourage them to keep a routine (even if it's a small one), to eat well, to take distraction and fun breaks, to limit their consumption of news, and to connect with others who've been through similar things as well as with friends and family.

R

Restore Independence : When talking about next steps, empower them to make decisions for their life, even if it feels like small steps. It's best if they can feel in control of their next steps, but they may need help seeing their options or choices. Connect them with resources, support groups, etc or give them helpful tools to take with them.



DE-ESCALATING



Escalation typically looks like anger becoming loud and volatile due to someone feeling deeply unsafe. De-escalation tactics can help people escalating in intense, overwhelming and/or dangerous ways to calm down and regain control over themselves. Due to the amount of stress traumatised people are in, they do not always have the ability to respond in ways they would normally. Even small, unexpected changes can trigger big responses. If in a situation like this, try the following techniques if you feel safe. **REMEMBER : You are not a professional and your first priority must be the safety of yourself and those for whom you are responsible. If the person has become a danger to themselves or others, get help immediately.**

When de-escalating, your goal is to be the calm in their storm. This is not the time to teach or correct. Maintain open body language and stay two arm-lengths away. Be sure not to corner or block the person. Your goal is to give them control back. Patiently validate their emotions and allow for stretches of silence as they process. It may take 20-30 minutes for them and their bodies to come back to a normal state.



Low & Slow (by Teresa Bolick): Keep your body, movements and speech low and slow. Speak calmly at a low tone and a slow pace. Position your physical posture lower than them (i.e. crouch if you're taller; sit if they are sitting, etc.). This communicates that you are not a threat. Patience is key and sometimes you will need to calmly repeat yourself a few times before they can hear you and process what you're saying.

Name It to Tame It (by Dan Siegel) : Notice what emotion is being exhibited and say something like "You seem to be feeling angry (or panicked, etc)". By helping the person acknowledge the emotion they are feeling, they are able to begin processing it. Acknowledging and naming distressing emotions can greatly reduce the impact of stress. Be sure to remind them that it is ok and normal to feel what they are feeling and that you want to help them stay safe in the intense emotions.





HOW TO CARE FOR THOSE IN CRISIS

A large part of processing crisis and trauma is telling the story of what happened over and over again. Not everyone has the capacity to hear stories of trauma and that is okay. If you are someone who is not able to listen to these stories without getting deeply distressed or experiencing secondary trauma, you can still offer support through the following principles.



Create Opportunities for the person to tell their story. Ask questions, stay engaged and empathetic. This is not the time for giving advice, correction or judgment. Don't force anyone to talk. Embrace silent pauses. Stay calm through the telling, you can fully express your outrage/horror/etc with an appropriate person after you've left them. Above all, don't respond in a way that the person feels a need to comfort you after telling their story. Allow repeated tellings of the same story.



Show Love frequently through your presence, your interest in their story, your concern for their well-being. Normalise their emotional responses. A key phrase to remember is "you are responding normally to an abnormal situation". Express your sorrow that these things happened (avoid useless phrases like "it will all be ok" or "at least..."). Be available but respect privacy. Be a safe place for them to express raw and uncensored feelings. Grieve with them.



Be Consistent : do what you say you'll do. Be where you say you'll be. Only share information that you are sure of - don't guess or estimate answers for them. If you set a time with them, be there for it. Be reliable in an unstable world of change and chaos.



Encourage Autonomy & Self-Management by connecting them with relevant resources, teaching them coping strategies, and encouraging them to eat well and take care of their practical needs. Help them identify the things they have control over (i.e. routines in the morning or at night).

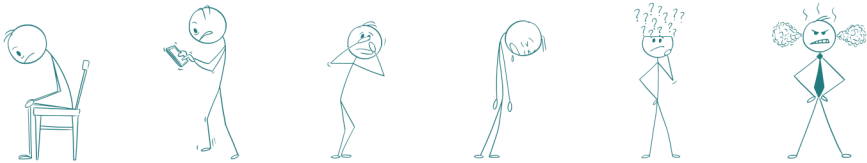
MANAGING OUR DISTRESS



Distress is the negative emotional response to the sources of stress in our life. One of the ways we cultivate resilience is by allowing ourselves to process distress. These key points will help you process your own distress as well as help you coach others to process their own feelings of distress

Common signs of distress :

**confusion | fear | anxiety | shame | guilt
hurt | overwhelmed | sad | weary
angry | frustrated | resentful**



HOW TO HANDLE OUR DISTRESS :

1. **Identify** your distress : we process feelings by calling them by name. If uncertain of what it is your feeling, it may help to talk it through with someone. Otherwise, label it as "uncertain"
2. **Go** to the Lord and pour out your heart (Lamentations 2:19). As David, Jeremiah and even Jesus showed us, it is good to share our distress with the Lord and he will meet us in it
3. **Ask** God for a word or scripture for you about this distress or the circumstances around it
4. **Write** about your distress and how God has met you in it
5. **Re-focus** your heart on what you are grateful for in this moment
6. **Remind** yourself that this season or circumstance will pass
7. **Share** with a trusted friend

HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF WHILE CARING FOR OTHERS

Remember that as a person who cares for the survivor of a traumatic event, you will be affected by their story. If you are someone who is hearing a lot of stories of suffering, you have a higher risk of secondary trauma, compassion fatigue and burnout.

Secondary Trauma : also known as Vicarious Trauma, it is similar to Post Traumatic Stress and is usually due to prolonged or cumulative exposure to others recounting traumatic events. Stories that resonate on a personal level (i.e. a child harmed that is the same age/gender as your child) have a higher risk of causing Secondary Trauma

Compassion Fatigue : the physical, mental and emotional exhasution that comes from caring for sick or traumatised people for an extened period of time. If not dealt with, compassion faituge leads to cynicism, hardness, impatience

Burnout : Loss of capacity to empathise and engage, characterised by an emotional depletion, a loss of motivation, and reduced commitment

To help you stay healthy, resilient and effective, regularly ask yourself the following questions :

What is the impact of others' suffering on me?

- Have I had moments of empathy, anger, frustration over what happened? If not, you may need to take a break
- Has this story affected my focus and concentration?
- What elements of the story stayed with me?
- What resources or tools have been useful to me and to others?
- Has this changed my view of God? of another people group? Is this new view just or true?



HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF WHILE CARING FOR OTHERS

It is important that you make sure you are caring for yourself so that you can be healthy and resilient as well as effective and empathetic in your caring for others. Here are some suggestions that can be helpful when you're ministering to survivors of trauma :



Accept that you will be affected emotionally by your work. You are not invincible. It is ok and completely normal to feel shocked, outraged, horrified, saddened or vulnerable at what you've seen or heard. Don't let their depth of suffering convince you that you shouldn't acknowledge your suffering on their behalf. You love best when you grieve well.

Learn your boundaries, get to know your limits. Be sure you have a weekly Sabbath and intentionally protect it, for it is vital. We all can handle different things at different levels. If you find you don't have the ability to listen to someone's suffering, then you could serve in practical ways like serving food and drinks, cleaning, organizing games, etc.



Examine your self-talk and beliefs. Are the stories you hear starting to shift your view of God? Of another people group? Of yourself? Having a solid theology of suffering will serve you well.

Share your experiences in formal and informal ways. Maintain the meaningful relationships in your life. Positive social connection with friends, family and community help cultivate your resilience and your ability to continue well.



Stay connected with the Lord. Replenish your spiritual health through prayer, quiet times, worship, prayer, meditation etc. The Holy Spirit is the best resource we have to carry these burdens and he will guide you and minister to you in your grief over the suffering you are hearing.



SOURCES

1. Crisis definition & Intervention

<https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/document-media/CrisisIntervention.pdf>

2. Psychological First Aid

<https://www.membercare.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/EMCC2022-Sandra-Menges-Loving-others-incl.-families-through-crisis-Psychological-First-Aid.pdf>

3. Trauma

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/trauma>

4. Grounding

<https://www.psychologytools.com/resource/grounding-techniques-menu/>

5. Coping Tips for Traumatic Events & Disasters

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/coping-tips>

6. Care for Caregivers

https://irct.org/assets/uploads/1018-8185_2007-2_175-177.pdf



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