

Calming the Storm



crisis communication for those in crisis



American Airlines Flight 587
Queens, NY
11.12.01

CHARACTERISTICS

- No warning or time for preparation
- Violent damage
- Strangers involved
- Stressful – Outside of normal range of experience
- Intense physical and/or psychological suffering

HIGH STRESS
LOW TRUST

THE POST-TRAUMA RESPONSE

- Physiological changes from Crisis/Trauma/Stress
 - Chemicals in the brain are activated and surge
 - Increased heart rate & respiration; increased strength; flight/fight kicks in
 - Basic thinking prevails; brain skips normal processes – survival
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“NORMAL” OR COMMON PHYSICAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

- Hyperventilating
- Trembling/Shaking
- Dizziness
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Nightmares
- Headache
- Stomachache
- Backache

“NORMAL” OR COMMON PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

- Shock and denial
 - Expression of emotion
 - Depression
 - Panic
 - Guilt
 - Hostility and resentment
 - Inability to return to usual activities
 - Hope
 - Adjustment to reality
-

NTSB HISTORICAL VIDEO

REAL
STORIES

WHAT DID THEY NEED?

- Information
- Initial support
- Practical needs – safety, shelter, food, clothing
- Protection
- Someone to say, “I’m sorry”

COMPASSIONATE
COMMUNICATION

CRISIS COMMUNICATION IS...

- Compassionate
 - Genuinely caring for another; active listening
- Competent
 - Prepared for practical application; organized
- Confirming
 - Validating their feelings and concerns
- Connecting
 - To resources, accurate information, loved ones/support system

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

AVIATION DISASTER FAMILY ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION



www.nts.gov/family

GLOBAL STANDARD

- Copy Cat Laws
 - Brazil, South Korea, China, Australia (voluntary), EU (27 countries)
 - Passenger Railroad
 - Voluntarily
 - General Aviation, Cruise Lines, U.S. Senate
 - Department of State involvement
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VICTIM SUPPORT TASKS SNAPSHOT

- Reliable, Publicized Toll-Free Number
- Information to Families As It Becomes Known
- Family Notification Before Public Release
- Secure Facilities at Departure/Arrival Points and Accident City for loved ones to gather and receive immediate information and care

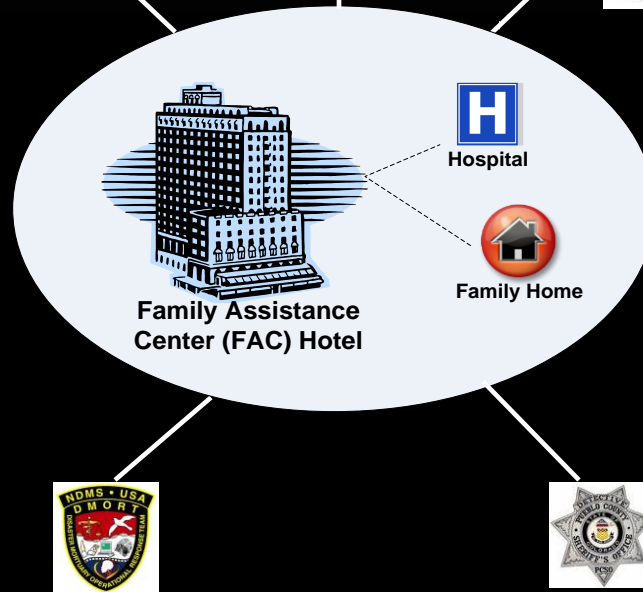
VICTIM SUPPORT TASKS SNAPSHOT

- Logistical Support – Transportation, lodging, meals, communications, incidentals
 - Procedures for Handling Personal Effects
 - Training for Staff
 - Provide a “Standard of Care”
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CARE TEAM MODEL

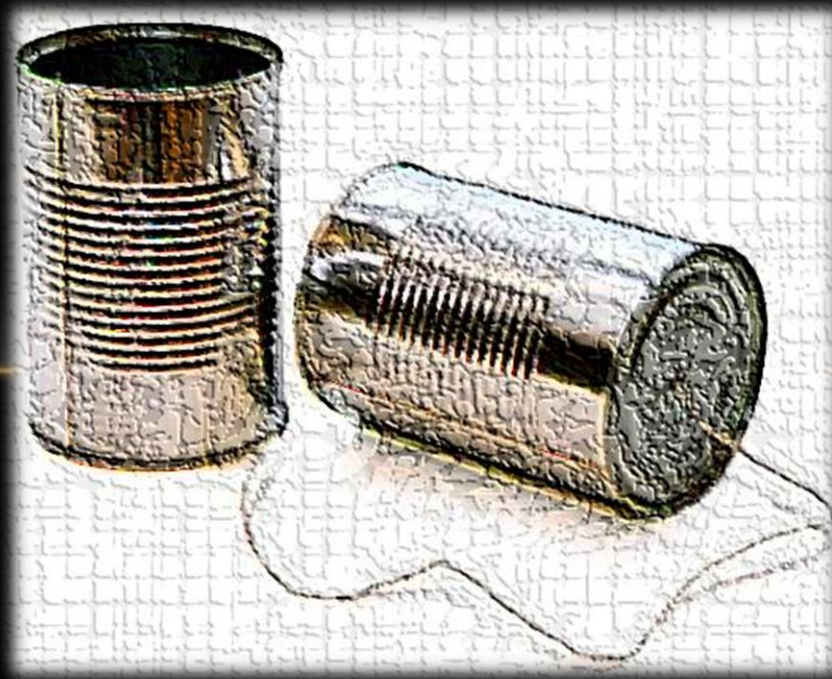
- Assign 2 trained volunteers per passenger
 - Psychological First Aid approach
 - Provide information, meet all logistical needs
 - 1 to 2 week assignment
 - Care for Care Team – MHP support & debrief required
 - Complete disengagement
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- Affected locations
- Insurance
- Crisis Management Experts
- Personal Effects/Site Clean-up
- Security
- Funeral Coordinators (Repatriation)



FAMILY ASSISTANCE

CRISIS COMMUNICATION



How do I say it?

THE KEYS OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION

- Validate
- Compassion
- What To Say
- What Not To Say
- Listen...Listen...Listen
- Verbal/Non-Verbal Communication



“You can’t not communicate.”

AVOID STATEMENTS LIKE...

- “I know how you feel.”
- “You shouldn’t feel that way.”
- “It will get better with time.”
- “Think about the good times.”
- “It’s God’s will.”
- “It could have been worse. You’re lucky to be alive.”
- “Try to pull yourself together. You’re only making things worse.”
- “Everyone has to die.”
- “At least you have other children.”

STATEMENTS THAT VALIDATE...

- This must be a very confusing time for you.”
- “It’s understandable to feel that way.”
- “I’m so sorry.”
- “You have every right to be sad.”
- “I can’t imagine how difficult that must be.”
- “He sounds like a great guy. Tell me more.”
- “You have some beautiful memories. Thank you for helping me get to know your family better.”

BREAKING BAD NEWS

HOW DO I BEGIN?

“Stephanie, this is very difficult for me to tell you...”

“Rob, I have some very unfortunate news for you...”

“Team, this is one of the most difficult things I have ever had to do. I am deeply saddened to tell you that...” or “This is a tragic day for (company name).”

“Mrs. Jones, I am so sorry we are meeting under these circumstances. I want to express my deepest sorrow for what has happened to you and your family.”



HEAD vs. HEART



“DID HE SUFFER?”

“I DON’T THINK I CAN GO ON WITHOUT HIM.”

**“HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN TO
ME AND MY FAMILY?”**

**“I WILL TELL EVERYONE HOW UNSAFE/HORRIBLE
YOUR COMPANY REALLY IS.”**



IDEAS

- Start your own “Care Teams”
- Have organized plans for crisis; use the FAC model
- Train employees the keys to crisis communication
- Start a Peer Support Program (CISM Team)
- Use your communication skills with co-workers, friends, families, neighbors

RESOURCES

- Ann Cline SanCartier – AnnSanCartier@gmail.com; 407-399-3698
- International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (CISD, CISM) - www.icisf.org
- National Transportation Safety Board Office of Transportation Disaster Assistance - www.nts.gov
- FBI Office for Victim Assistance - www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/victimassist/home

***No act of kindness, no matter
how small, is ever wasted.***

AESOP

“The Lion and the Mouse”

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