



Disaster Behavioral Health: How to support patients and colleagues during critical incidents

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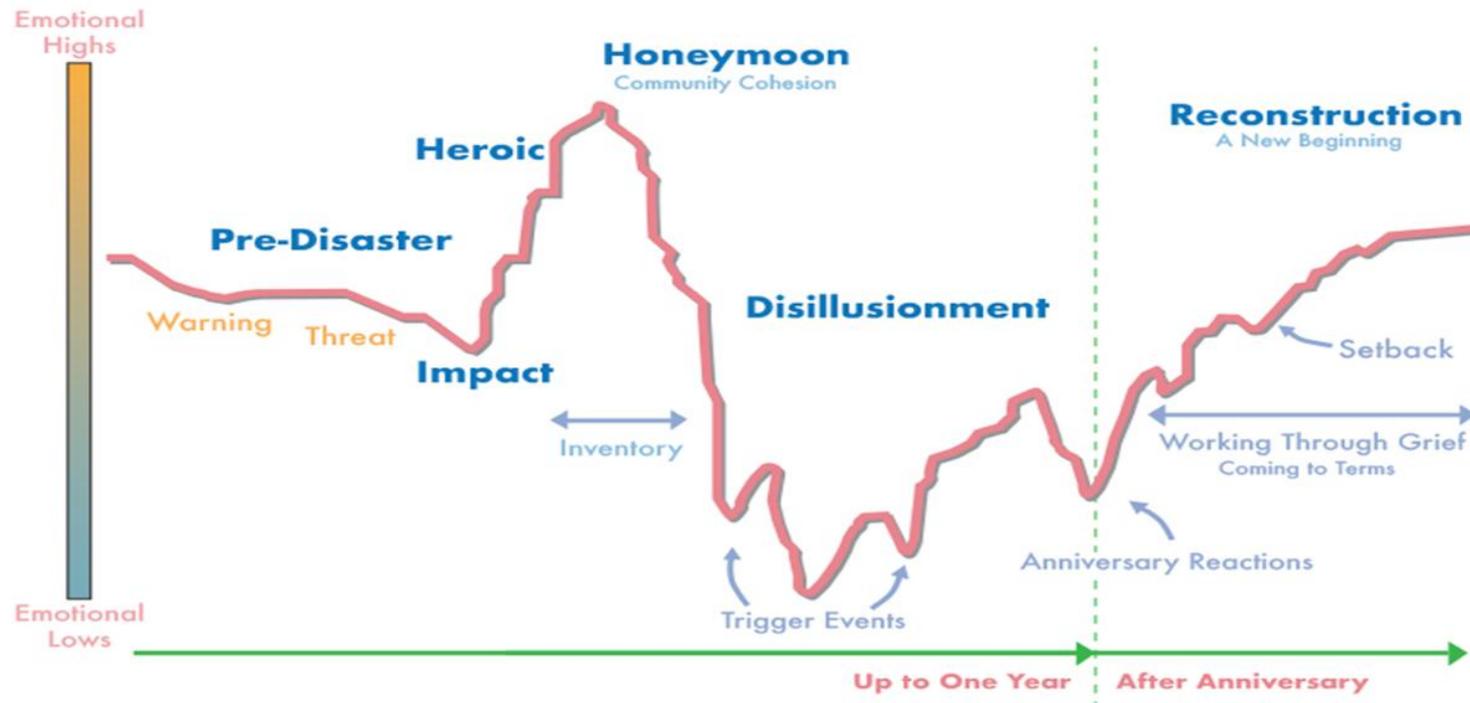
Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services



Objectives

1. Define disaster behavioral health
2. Identify disaster behavioral health responses
3. Discuss ways in which healthcare professionals can support peers and citizens who are experiencing disaster responses

Disaster & Stress Reactions





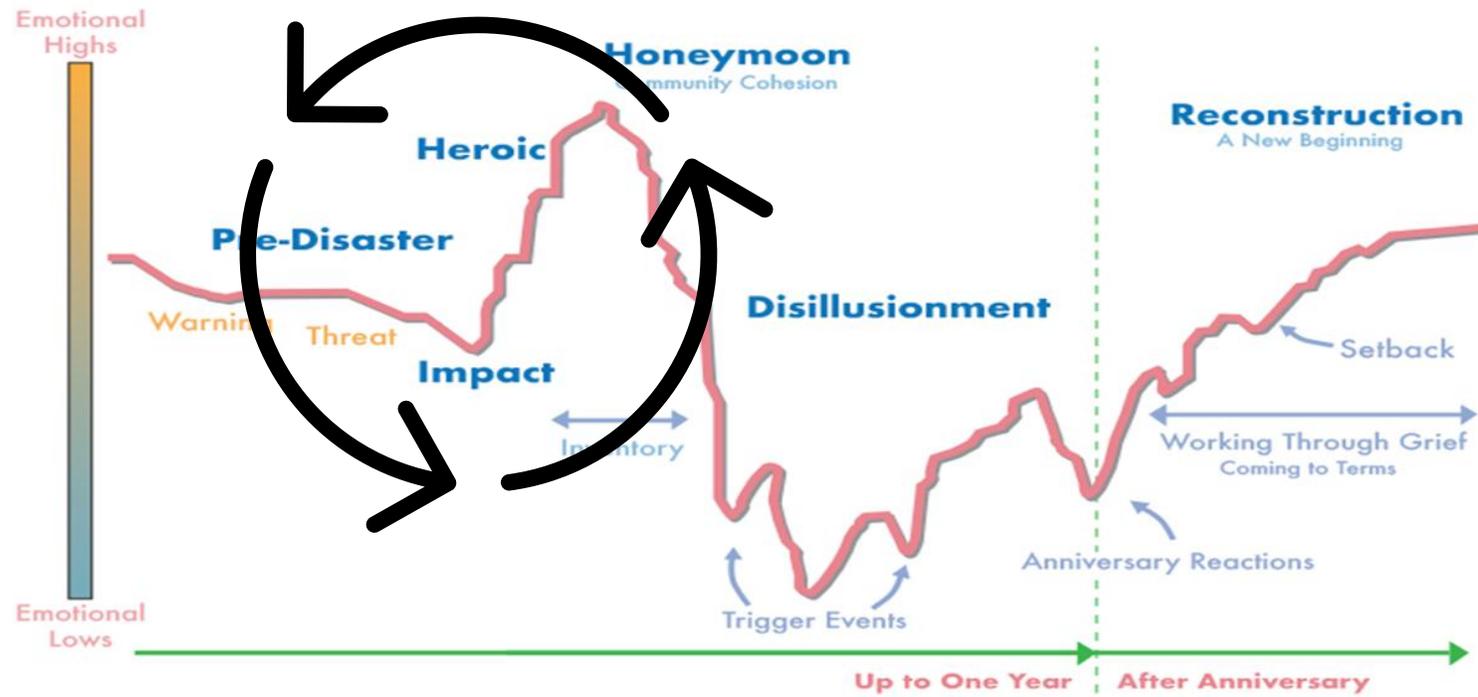
What is disaster behavioral health?

Also known as:

- crisis counseling
- mental health support
- Psychological First Aid
- crisis intervention



Disaster & Stress Reactions



Disaster Behavioral Health Defined

Efforts to increase **adaptive functioning** in individuals and groups who have been impacted, directly or indirectly, by disaster incidents. This is to be distinguished from therapeutic treatment interventions or case management.

Adaptive functioning is also known as:

Stress response

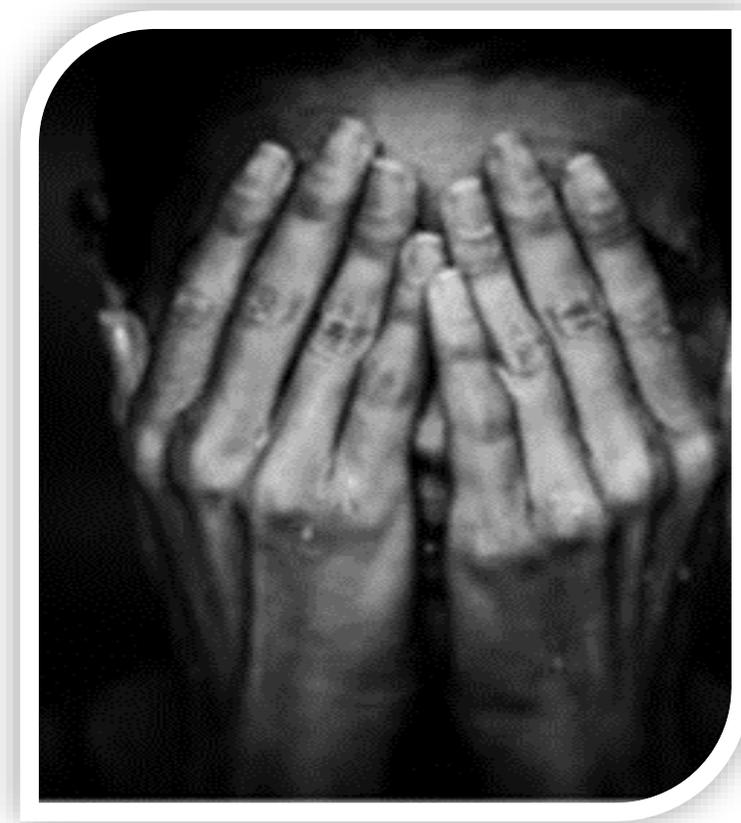
Trauma response

Disaster reaction

Dysregulation

Symptoms of Maladaptive Functioning

- Sleep disturbances
- Memory/ability to recall and retain information
- Startle response or feeling hypervigilant
- Ringing in ears
- Feeling detached
- Increased heart rate
- Changes in breathing or feeling tight in the chest
- Irritability
- Appetite/Gastrointestinal changes





What are the most common immediate needs?

- ✓ Information
- ✓ Adaptive functioning support
- ✓ Clinical intervention





An Example of Disaster Reactions





Discussion

1. What were some of the symptoms that you saw in Captain Phillips immediately following his rescue?



2. How did the emergency medical provider address those symptoms?





First Responder Reactions

Responding to Disaster Reactions

- Give clear instructions and prepare to repeat yourself
- Be an active listener
- Be confident and calm
- Let people know what you are doing when assessing or treating patients
- Provide a warm handoff to other professionals (ex: “We are going to take you X to see Y so that they can help you)
- Don’t offer information that hasn’t been verified
- Use grounding techniques

Addressing Stress in Ourselves and Our Peers

1. Check in regularly with yourself as well as others
2. Provide cover: Reassign duties until person feels confident to return to regular duties or offer them breaks/time to check in with themselves. If you are witnessing some of these behaviors in a way that is disruptive to others, it's a good idea to get them somewhere they can calm themselves.
3. Calming: Don't say "calm down!" Show them how to calm down by modeling calm behavior, ask if they want to take a walk, maintain eye contact, offer comfort items like water or a place to sit
4. Maintain Connection: Avoid isolation, keep people engaged in creative ways



Questions?

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