

SETTING UP PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AFTER A CRISIS EVENT

SUPPORT AND COMFORT HELPS

After a major incident, the confusion, turbulent emotions, and feelings of being insecure are overwhelming. A pressing need of survivors and witnesses is to be listened to, get help with practicalities and to be informed that their reactions are natural. Talking over a cup of tea, having practical help and information about reactions to crisis events makes a huge difference to the emotional well-being.

Talking to a supportive person from the Red Cross Red Crescent can re-establish trust in others that may be shattered when the unexpected has happened.

9 EASY STEPS

How the Red Cross Red Crescent branch sets up support will depend upon the event and the context. The activities suggested should begin immediately, last a few days only or they can stretch into a longer MHPSS response.

1. Contact authorities for the emergency response to decide where MHPSS support is most needed.
2. Form a team trained in psychosocial support and psychological first aid. Meet once a day to catch up and plan the next steps. Be flexible in the responses as the situation may change rapidly.
3. Set up safe spaces with room for activities for different age groups where it is easy to convene. Use a community or evacuation centre, a café, or a school.
4. Give a quick course on psychological first aid to new volunteers, and pair them with someone more experienced. Ensure they know how to calm themselves when in distress.
5. If safe, organize daily MHPSS walks in the area so those who wish to approach the team can do so. Keep an eye open for groups that may need support and who do not come forward. They are often the most vulnerable.
6. Meet with the team at the end of the day to work out how to address the identified needs.
7. If households are affected, someone from the team could organize household visits.
8. Follow up with people who need support and refer to agencies that can support the identified needs.
9. Go over the needs and develop a plan for the next weeks with branch and the community organizations such as faith-based groups, schools, and leisure groups. Look at arranging support groups or giving sessions for example on how to support children after major life events etc.