Psychological First Aid (PFA)

Psychological First Aid may be thought of as a fundamental aspect of applied crisis intervention and disaster mental health. PFA can help everyone (children, adolescents, adults, elders, families, and communities) who has been exposed to a traumatic or emergency incident, including responders and support service providers.

PFA is an evidence-informed approach that is built on the concept of human resilience. PFA aims to reduce stress symptoms and assist in a healthy recovery following a traumatic event, natural disaster, public health emergency, or even a personal crisis. In addition, it is an important tool for assessment and can serve as the essential platform upon which survivors can be referred to a higher level of care for more advanced individual and group crisis disaster mental health interventions such as small group defusings and critical incident stress debriefings.

Psychological First Aid Tasks:
1. Provide a safe physical environment.
2. Supply basic first order needs such as water.
3. Reduce psychological stressors.
4. Be a caring comforting presence.
5. Educate on common stress reactions.
6. Empower by supporting strengths and encouraging existing coping skills.
7. Provide connections to natural support networks.
8. Assess potential need to referral to the next level of care when needed.

Psychological First Aid Considerations:
- PFA is not psychotherapy, nor is it a substitute for therapy.
- Consider cultural determinants that may impact someone’s ability to receive service.
- Assume you are dealing with normal people who are having normal reactions to an abnormal event.

Psychological First Aid is a simple and practical tool that you can use to reduce stress levels. By understanding your stress reactions and utilizing Psychological First Aid principles, you can enhance resilience in yourself, family, and community. See Psychological First Aid Manuals.