



Grantmakers in Health
Behavioral Health Network Webinar
Thursday, August 15, 2013



www.mha-nyc.org

***“ ... It helped me for you to listen ...
because no one else has wanted to.”***

- Caller to Disaster Distress Helpline after Hurricane Sandy

Key Principles of *Disaster Behavioral Health*

- No one who experiences a disaster is untouched by it
- Most people pull together and function during and after a disaster, however effectiveness can be diminished
- Disaster stress and grief reactions are “normal responses to an abnormal situation”
- Survivors respond to active, genuine interest and concern
- Disaster mental health assistance is often more practical than psychological in nature (offering a phone, distributing coffee, listening, encouraging, reassuring, comforting)
- Behavioral health concerns exist in most aspects of preparedness, response and recovery

Traumatic Stress

- When a child or adult feels intensely threatened by an event s/he is involved in or witnesses, that event is a trauma
- Traumatic events can include:
 - Acts of violence
 - Terrorism
 - Natural Disasters
- The unexpected death of a loved one can also result in traumatic stress
- Traumatic Stress can include:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Behavioral changes
 - Difficulties at school
 - Withdrawal
 - Substance abuse
- Not every child or adult experiences traumatic stress after a potentially traumatic event. Influencing factors include:
 - Size & scope of event
 - Proximity (eyewitness, neighborhood, etc.)
 - Whether / what kind of losses suffered
 - Pre-event functioning / support (resiliency)
- 1 out of every 4 children will experience a traumatic event before the age of 16; some, but not all, will develop *child traumatic stress*

Disaster Distress Helpline

PHONE: 1-800-985-5990 TEXT: "TalkWithUs" to 66746



Sample Caller Scenarios: Superstorm Sandy, Newtown CT Shooting & Boston Marathon Bombing

(names & other identifying information changed for confidentiality)

- *Caller is a 39 yr old female & a victim of Hurricane Sandy. Caller is having a difficult time adjusting. Caller lost her home due to a fire caused by the storm. Caller is currently staying w/ family members in a tight space. **Caller is distressed because the entire family is undocumented and not able to receive FEMA assistance** & have limited resources available. Crisis Counselor (CC) provided emotional support and referral to Project Hope (New York State Hurricane Sandy Crisis Counseling Program) and the American Red cross and food hotline.*
- *Caller from Wisconsin is struggling with anxiety related to the shootings in CT. Caller has a history of anxiety and was last in treatment a year ago. **Caller stated that she has two small children and she has felt overwhelmed with anxiety and fear since the shootings.** Crisis Counselor encouraged caller to reconnect to therapy and validated her emotions and reactions to the tragic events. Caller felt motivated to reconnect to therapy at the end of the call.*
- *Caller was a witness to the explosion in Boston. **Caller stated that she was in one of the buildings next to the explosion and witnessed graphic imagery that has been hard to keep out of her mind.** Caller reports having trouble sleeping and focusing at work. Caller was looking for support about how to cope. CC validated caller's feelings after the experience and emphasized that her reactions are a normal response to trauma. Caller agreed that she would benefit from short-term counseling. Caller and CC also discussed ways to cope for the night. Caller will try to journal and will also try some breathing exercises and visual meditation exercises. Caller is aware that DDH is available 24/7 for future support.*

Sample Texter Scenarios: Superstorm Sandy, Newtown CT Shootings & Boston Marathon Bombing

(Transcribed directly, so misspellings/grammar intentional; identifying information changed or deleted for confidentiality)

- Sandy: *The house my boyfriend and I were supposed to move into was destroyed. I feel as though any plans that I've had now need to change and **I don't know how to deal with the stress.... I really need some coping skills....** I had started getting ready to move into a home in union beach that has now been destroyed by the storm... I started school again, but I don't know if I should drop out and work full time so we can afford somewhere to live.*
- Sandy: *It's been 6 months since sandy and **I feel like I'm back tracking and not moving on. I lost my home & pets that nite. How can I try to be happy again?....** It's just so hard to get up n start the day.. I have nightmares almost every night I think bc I wake up panicked and sweaty if I do sleep. Once I get myself up and going its not so bad but a lot of days I have no motivation to do anything. I don't care about losing my house and everything in it as much as I miss my pets.*
- Newtown: *I was wondering my kids know nothing as of this point of the tragedy. I have kept the news off. They are 6 and 7 in 1st and 2nd grade. **My fear is they will hear something horrific from someone else do I bring this up? If so what do I say?** The sad part is they just practiced a lockdown the day before at their school thanks for your help.*
- Boston: *I'm just incredibly terrified of another random bombing that could be anywhere anytime I leave my home. It's becoming a bit of a fear. Maybe I'm watching it on TV too much? I don't know. **I don't want the terrorist to change how I live and let them think they've won, but I am struggling early this AM as I haven't slept.***



Here 2 Help
In Behavioral Health



Here2Help Connect

- 14+ local, state, regional & national crisis hotline & other crisis contact services
- Disaster Distress Helpline 'Core Region Center'
- LifeNet- New York City's crisis information, referral & counseling hotline
- Project Hope (FEMA Sandy Crisis Counseling Program) & Project Liberty (9/11 CCP) point of contact



9/11: Mental Health in the Wake of Terrorist Attacks

- Communication systems a critical element of a disaster mental health response plan.
- Before a major disaster occurs, it is advantageous to have a behavioral health hotline that is already performing functions that are useful following a disaster.
- In order to inform the public about available behavioral health resources following a disaster, public education campaigns are vital.
- Help-seeking for mental health care is more pronounced beginning a month to 3 months after the disaster, continuing at higher rates for at least 2 years thereafter.

Draper, J., McCleery, G., and Schaedle, R. (2006). Mental health services in response to September 11: the central role of the Mental Health Association of New York City. In Neria, Y., et. al. (eds.) *9/11: Mental Health in the Wake of Terrorist Attacks* (ch. 18, p. 282), Cambridge University Press.

Disaster Distress Helpline

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What: A national hotline (**1-800-985-5990**) and SMS (**text 'TalkWithUs' to 66746**) service available to all U.S. states/territories before, during & after disasters that offers 24/7 crisis counseling and support via a network of crisis call centers that are affiliated with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Goal: To assist individuals and families experiencing emotional distress related to disaster, to help them move forward on the path to recovery

Also:

- **Complements existing local / state / national I & R / Crisis Hotlines**
- **Multi-lingual** interpretation services in 100+ languages; **Spanish-counseling and texts** ('Hablamos' to 66746) also available 24/7
- Texting available to all **U.S. territories**: Pacific Islands can text "TalkWithUs" or "Hablamos" to 1-206-430-1097 & Caribbean Islands to 1-212-461-4635
- TTY (1-800-846-8517) available, and texting also promoted to **deaf and hard of hearing**
- **Social media** (facebook.com/distressline & @distressline) & **website** (disasterdistress.samhsa.gov) for stakeholders, target audience, public-at-large
- **Outreach** to local, state, regional and national stakeholders, working alongside disaster relief providers to assist individuals, families and communities impacted by disasters.



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MHA-NYC / Link2Health Solutions

<http://www.mha-nyc.org>

<http://www.link2healthsolutions.org>

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990

<http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

For More Information on Disaster Behavioral Health:

NCTSN: <http://www.nctsn.org>

SAMHSA: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

CDC: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/primer.asp>



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