

Finding Structure in Chaos: Crisis Leadership Behaviors to Protect Wellbeing & Foster Resilience in Hurricanes, War, Pandemics & Other Disasters

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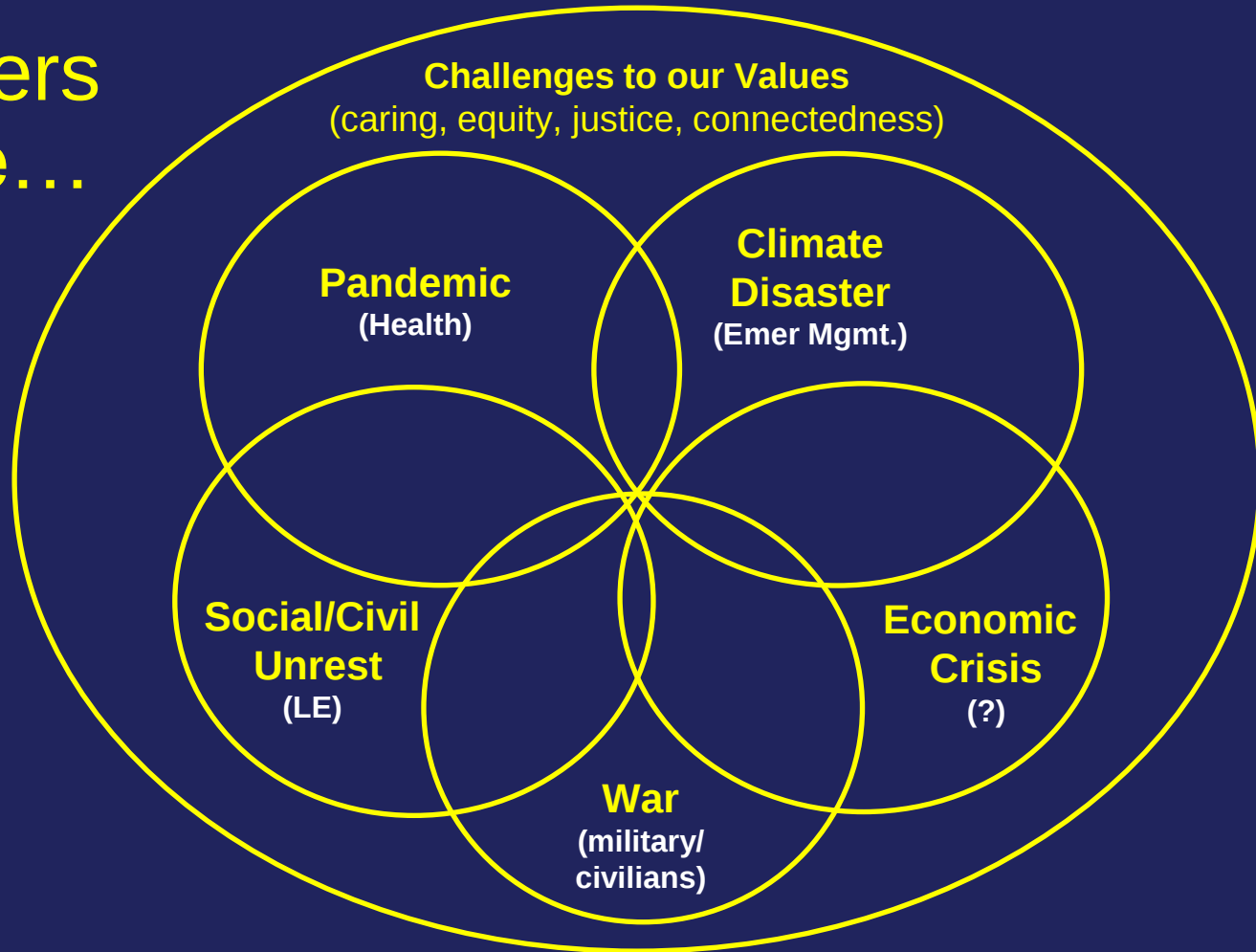
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Disasters Collide...

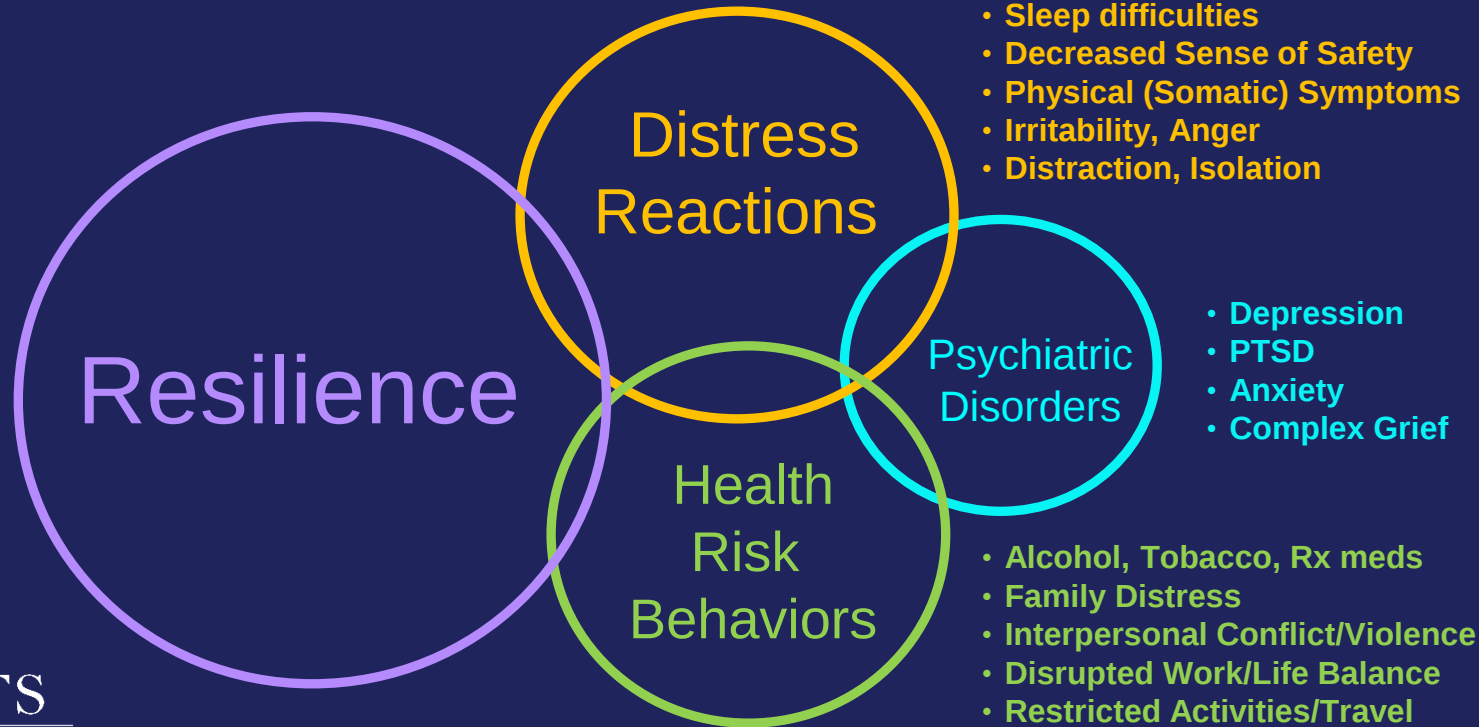


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Psychological & Behavioral Responses to Pandemics & Disasters



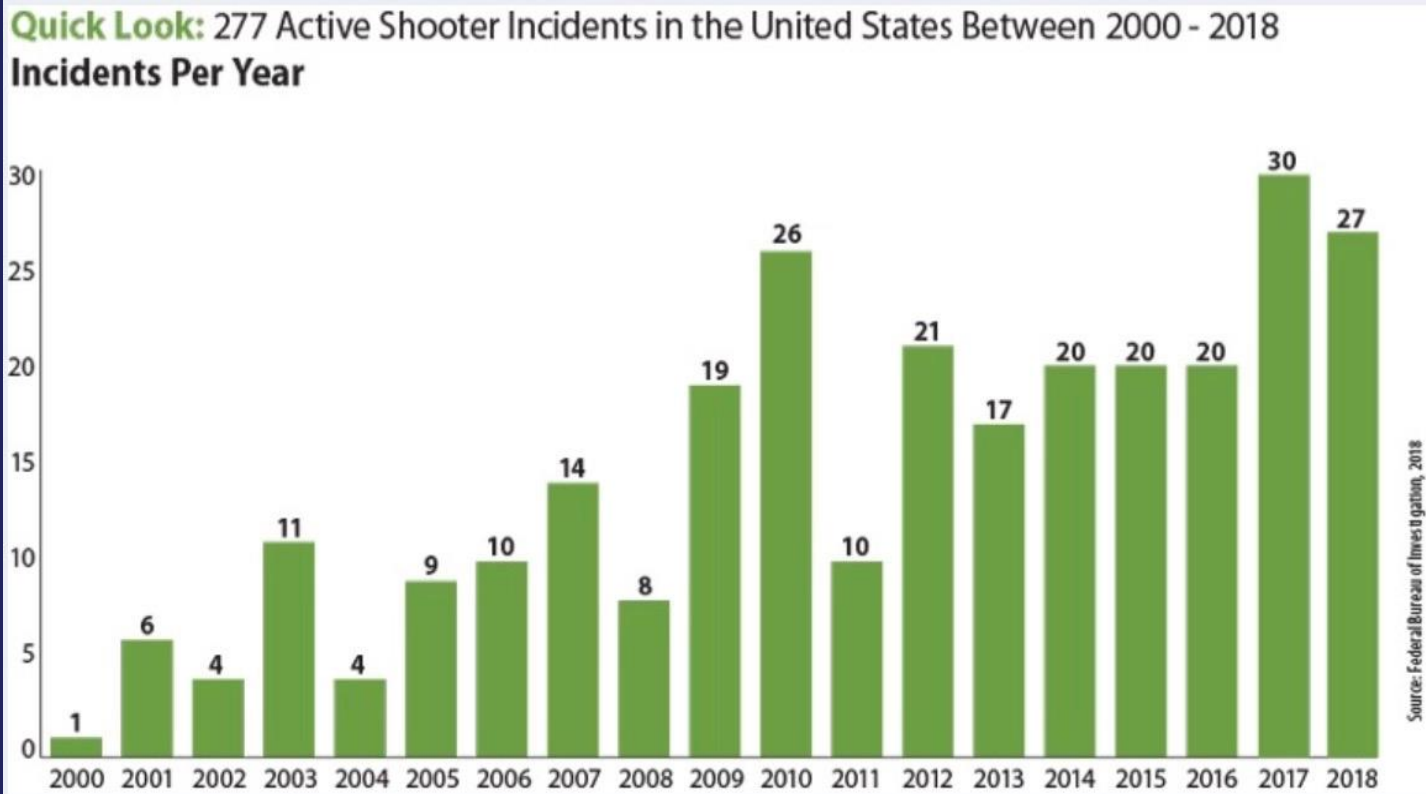
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Adapted from: Ursano, R., Fullerton, C., Weisaeth, L., & Raphael, B. (2017). Individual and Community Responses to Disasters. In R. Ursano, C. Fullerton, L. Weisaeth, & B. Raphael (Eds.), *Textbook of Disaster Psychiatry* (pp. 1-26). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Community Phases

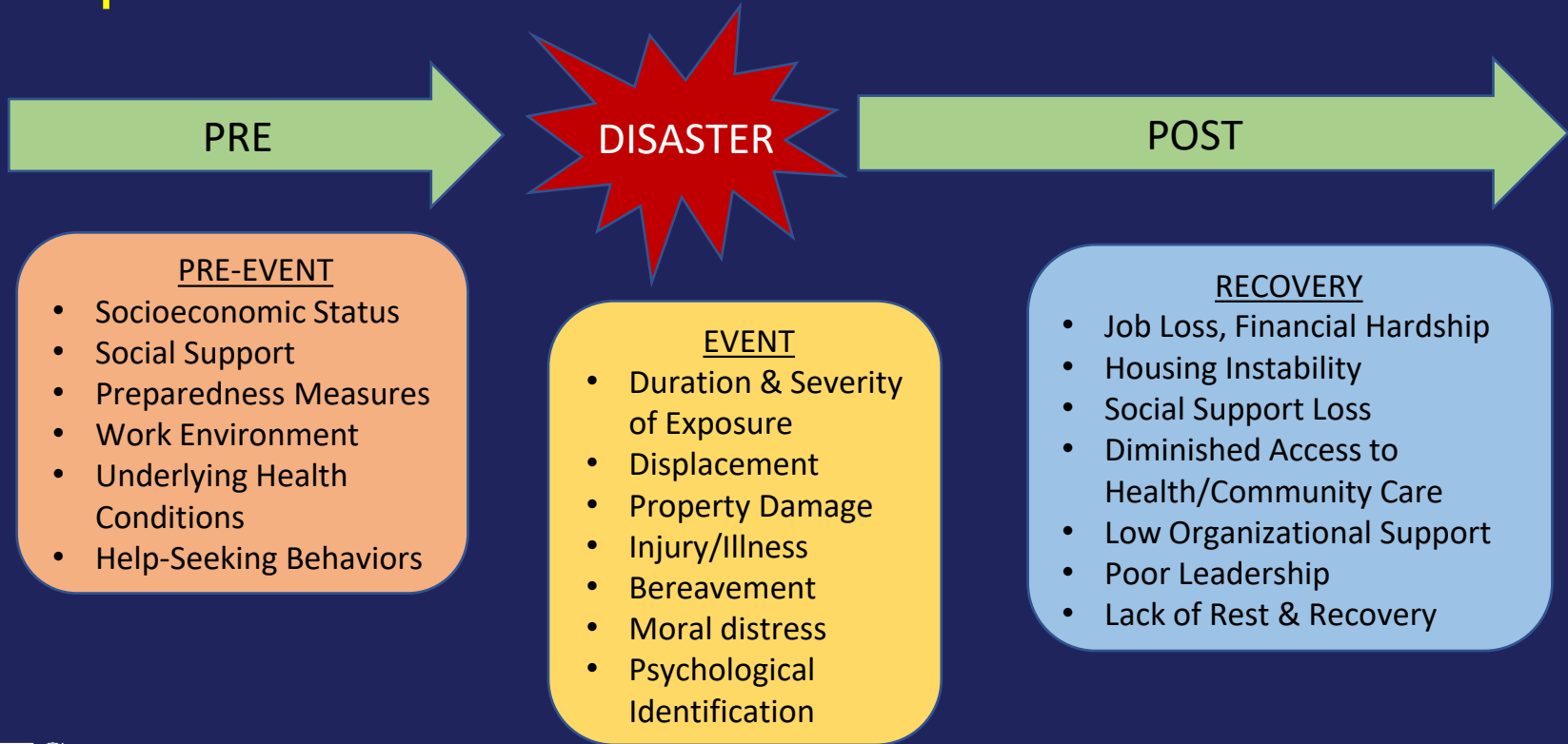


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Aspects of Risk in Disasters



Populations Benefitting from Special Considerations

Dependence
on Systems
of Care

Cognitive &
Mobility
Impaired

Structurally
Disadvantaged;
Homelessness

Migrants &
Refugees

BIPOC
Communities

Disaster
Workers &
Responders

LGBTQ+
Individuals

Children &
Adolescents



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http://paulaphoto.com/ukraines-war--elderly-lives-frozen-by-conflict/ukraine_elderlypaulabronstein_29

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

Five Essential Elements:

Safety

Calming

Self/Community Efficacy

Connectedness

Hope/Optimism

- Analogous to “First Aid”
- Population-based “framework”
- “Do no harm” approach
- Resilience-focused
- NOT a cure/tx for illness
- MAY mitigate illness/dz

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Crisis Leadership Behaviors

- Communicate Effectively
- Encourage Self-Care
- Promote Cohesion
- Support Emotion Regulation
- Foster Purpose
- Facilitate Help-Seeking
- Encourage Growth
- Promote Reintegration
- Address Grief
- Sustain Morale

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Birkeland, M. S., Nielsen, M. B., Knardahl, S., & Heir, T. (2016). Time-lagged relationships between leadership behaviors and psychological distress after a workplace terrorist attack. *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 89(4), 689–697.

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Grief Leadership

- Communicate effectively and openly
- Being visible and present
- Provide accurate and timely info
- Encourage working together
- Promote cohesion
- Anticipate and acknowledge grief
- Honor losses; make meaning
- Look to the future
- Encourage growth and a “new normal”



Wright, K. S., Sparacino, L., Bartone, P., Cervantes, R. A., Jr, & Ingraham, L. H. (1987). *The human response to the Gander military air disaster: A summary report* (p. 60). Defense Technical Information Center.



Scene at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, after military plane crash at Gander, Newfoundland

IMAGE: <https://history.amedd.army.mil/booksdocs/historyofusarmymisc/page374.jpg>

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GRIEF LEADERSHIP DURING COVID-19

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has put in perspective the need for leaders to prepare for disruptions of work routines, anxiety within their communities and organizations, and even deaths of community members, friends, and team members. Understanding people's reactions to the losses associated with tragic events informs the roles that leaders can play in support of recovery. In the aftermath of traumatic events, many people want to hear guidance from their community or organization leaders. During pandemics, leaders must:

Understand people's reactions to the losses associated with tragic events—Recognize the role that leaders can play in support of recovery.

attend to many responsibilities, including effective communication to those in their communities who have questions, seek reassurance, want to take action, or just want to know they are not alone in their grief.

As distress and anxiety turn to sorrow and mourning, leaders are responsible for identifying when communities are ready for the next step forward. Leaders have been to guide the language of each community to help individuals, families, and care providers.

Communicate Effectively and Openly
Communicating effectively in crisis situations requires an understanding of very special concepts, principles, and practices. Leaders are encouraged to learn these approaches or have access to crisis communication specialists. Worry and distress can spread within communities affected by trauma, resulting in rumors and distortion of the event. Honest lies can amplify these effects. Formal and informal leaders can role models in sharing grief, communicating hope, managing rumors, and providing support to others.

Immediate Responses
Be visible — Make public announcements and appearances
Typical methods to promote visibility may not apply during pandemics. Novel and creative ways to use electronic and social media will be required. By providing useful and accurate information, leaders can re-establish a sense of safety and enhance the community's trust in leadership.

Provide accurate, timely information on what is known, what is not known, and when more information will be communicated
Press briefings, use of social media, and other vehicles can reassure individuals, families, and communities, and help dispel rumors. Be a credible source of information, direct people to other credible sources, and inform them when new information and resources become available.

Understand that people process information differently in high stress situations
When stressed, people have difficulty recalling more than a few main points and tend to focus on negative information. So keep messages simple, repeat frequently, and emphasize positive messaging.

Use multiple channels of communication
People seek information from multiple sources depending on age, culture, ethnicity, geography, community composition, and history. TV, newspapers, radio, religious leaders, teachers, and firefighters provide diverse channels for communication. Remember that in-person channels will be sharply curtailed during a pandemic, so remote communication sources are critical.

Spontaneous and encourage working together
Leaders promote calmness, empathy, optimism, a can-do attitude, and mutual support. By modeling the desired behavior and tone, leaders help others learn.

Communicate the status of existing and available resources
Monitor emerging needs, support fellow community leaders, and communicate resource availability and requirements. During and following a pandemic, available resources will change frequently and will require frequent updates. Guiding people to resources can instill confidence and credibility.

QUESTION 1

During recent disasters in your community, which groups have suffered the biggest impact?

What do you feel has been effective to help those groups?

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QUESTION 2

Considering that grief is common in disasters, what have you seen leaders do to address the issue of grief that had a positive impact on helping people heal and recover?

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