



community
agencies
responding to
disaster



Psychological First Aid (PFA)

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Distress Scale

- Distress comes in various levels, imagine it ranging from 0 to 10
 - 0 = calm and 10 = extreme distress
- When faced with a stressful situation, try to keep distress below a 6 on this scale.
- If distress begins to rise above a six, practice self-care and PFA tools to lower it.

“4 For Calm” Breathing

- Take 4 low slow breaths.
 - Count silently from 1 to 4 with each breath in.
 - Count silently from 1 to 4 with each breath out.
- Breathe from the belly
 - Use the diaphragm (not the upper chest).
 - The belly pushes out as you breathe in.
 - The belly pulls in as you push the air out.

Time to Take Five

- Look at the stress reactions yourself or CERT teammates are displaying. Are they:
 - Beginning to impact your judgment or interactions?
 - Making you lose compassion for those you're trying to help?
 - Causing you to make decisions that place yourself or others in danger?
- If yes, say “Time to Take Five”.
 - When you hear it, do it.
 - Have the team agree to use this phrase so everyone is more likely to follow it.
- Step away from the situation and practice self-care (eat, hydrate, practice “4 For Calm”).

Standing/Seated Backbend

- Take a deep breath in and out and straighten your spine.
- Inhale, reaching arms wide and up towards the ceiling.
- Breathe out, slowly look behind you, bend slightly from your upper back and chest.
- Breathe in and release, moving to straight spine.
- Breathe out and slowly bend back again, deepening into the stretch.
- Breathe in and out in this stretch for 4 breaths.
- Breathe in and straighten, breathe out and release arms to your sides.