

Psychological first aid for young people



Ensure safety



Remove the young person from, or reduce exposure to the threat of harm.

Keep calm



Provide a calm environment, away from stressful situations or exposure to sights, sounds and smells of the trauma event.

Connect with others



Keep families together and keep young people with their parents or other close relatives whenever possible.

Encourage self-efficacy



Help families to identify their own strengths and abilities to cope.

Instill hope



Reassure the young person that their feelings are normal, and that things will be ok.

What is psychological first aid for young people?

Psychological first aid (PFA) is an internationally accepted strategy that can be used anytime, but is most widely used in the first hours, days and weeks following a traumatic event. ***Here are some practical ways that psychological first aid for young people can be applied:***



Ensure safety: Where possible, protect the young person from witnessing further traumatic sights and sounds. Protect them from exposure to media or other people who want to talk to them about the event and are not their family or part of the emergency response.



Keep calm: Speak in a low, calm voice. Tell young people they are safe (when this is the case). Answer questions honestly, but without any frightening or graphic details. Reassure them that they have you and other adults looking out for them and that they will be with their families soon.



Connect with others: Reunite young people with their families and loved ones as soon as possible following a disaster or traumatic event. If this is not possible, try to keep in touch by phone or online (e.g. private messaging).



Encourage self-efficacy: Where possible, encourage young people to meet their own needs. For example, if they are agitated, suggest they try a calming strategy, such as a slow breathing exercise. Help them to make decisions and prioritise and solve problems themselves.



Instill hope: Be mindful of young people's needs and reactions and be responsive to them. Be gentle and accept all responses. Make it clear that while the young person's feelings are normal, people will recover and things will get better.

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