Post Disaster Stress Management
With Steven Horne, RH(AHG)

What Would You Do…?

How Danger Affects Us
- Perceived danger stimulates the hypothalamus to release CRH and vasopressin
- This stimulates the pituitary to release ACTH
- ACTH stimulates the adrenals to release cortisol, epinephrine and norepinephrine
- Cortisol inhibits the release of CRH and ACTH
- This is known as the HPA Axis (Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis)

Involuntary Reactions
- The body's reactions to trauma are involuntary and not the result of conscious choice
- In fact, these reactions hijack higher brain functions and cause us to react on instinct rather than rational thought
- This allows split second action that can make the difference between life and death in a crisis

Instinctive Reactions
- Fight – get angry and fight back against what is hurting or threatening us
- Flee – run away from what is hurting or threatening us
- Freeze – when we perceive that fight or flight is not possible, we react by becoming immobile (in this state, although the body is not moving it is highly primed or tensed for movement)

Normal and Healthy Reactions
- The stress response is a normal (and healthy) reaction that primes us for maximum performance in difficult situations
- It is NOT an enemy and needs to be worked with, not denied or seen as bad
Typical Reactions to Trauma
- Confusion, disorientation and denial
- Loss of memory and concentration
- Inability to make rational decisions
- Fear, panic, extreme anxiety, irritability
- Depression, apathy, sadness
- Crying, screaming or overly talkative
- Speechless, passive, withdrawn
- Shock, numbness, stupor and disassociation (“this can’t be real”)
- Auditory and visual hallucinations
- Disrupted sleep and appetite

Physical Symptoms
- Increased heart rate, heart palpitations
- Shortness of breath, tightness in chest
- Dry mouth
- Dilated pupils
- Higher-pitched voice, stammering
- Increased muscle tension and/or weakness
- Trembling
- Sweaty palms, hands, soles of feet, and armpits
- Butterflies in the stomach, nausea, and faintness
- Oversensitivity to noise

Behavioral Reactions
- Isolation and withdrawal
- Irritability, argumentative or agitated
- Extreme talkativeness or silence
- Increased or decreased desire for food
- Suspicion and paranoia
- Destructive behavior to self and others
- Increased smoking, alcohol or drug use
- Change in sexual needs or functioning

Normal Stress Reaction
- The normal stress response causes a state of alert, which is followed by a state of discharge, which releases the tension from the nervous system, allowing the system to return to equilibrium

The Discharge Process
- Discharge of the residual emotional tension from a freeze reaction takes place through:
  - Expressions of anger: shouting, yelling, kicking, punching, stomping one’s feet, etc. (which discharge a “fight” energy)
  - Expressions of fear: shaking, trembling, pacing, ringing one’s hands, running, etc. (which discharge a “flight” energy)
  - Expressions of grief: crying, moaning, wailing, sighing, screaming, etc. (which discharge a “helpless” energy, i.e., there’s nothing I can do about it)
  - Laughter can also be a discharge reaction to feeling shame (as in talking about the problem until one starts to find humor in it and begins to laugh)
  - Once the tension in the body has been discharged, a person is able to enter back into the flow of life

Working with Nature
- “The shaking and trembling we experience following traumatic experiences are part of the innate process of resetting the nervous system and restoring our psyche to wholeness. If we become frightened by these sensations and resist them, we block our return to nervous equilibrium and mental and emotional wholeness—and the remaining trauma inside us becomes frozen.”
- “This capacity for self-regulation holds the key for our modern survival—beyond the brutal grip of anxiety, panic, night terrors, depression, physical symptoms and helplessness that are the earmarks of prolonged stress and trauma. However, in order to experience this restorative faculty, we must develop the capacity to face certain uncomfortable and frightening physical sensations and feelings without becoming overwhelmed by them.”
- From *In An Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness* by Peter A. Levine
Empathy or Compassion

- Empathy or compassion is our ability to entrain with another person and share in their emotional experience.
- We are empathically tuning into the messages their heart is sending and experiencing “common passion” or common feeling.

Empathy vs Sympathy

- Empathy is helpful.
- Sympathy is NOT.
- Sympathy is feeling sorry for someone, which often leads to the belief that you have to rescue them.
- Sympathy is disempowering, while empathy is empowering.

Self-Preparation

- You can't handle emotional reactions in others that you don't know how to deal with inside of yourself.
- If you have unresolved emotions or issues with anger, fear, grief or laughter you will subconsciously subvert other people's recovery process.

Helping Yourself

- Take a few deep breaths and try to relax.
- Pray and think positively, force your mind to repeat positive affirmations if necessary.
- Avoid letting your imagination run away with you, stay focused in the present and don't think about what's going to happen next.
- Start looking around for what needs to be done and get busy.

Positive versus Wishful Thinking

- Positive thinking is not a passive idea in your mind, it's a thought that you connect with positive emotions, which leads to constructive action.
- Positive thinking includes awareness.
- Being prepared aids positive thinking.

Helping Others

- If people are dazed, confused or paralyzed, take charge—assign people tasks, keep them busy, be positive and encouraging.
- If people need to talk about their feelings about what's happening, listen.
- If people cry, allow them to cry and get it out of their system.
- If people are angry, allow them to vent as long as they are not harming others, help them channel their anger into doing something about the situation.
- Keep your sense of humor.
Some Helpful Remedies

Rescue, 5-Flower or Distress Remedy
- General remedy for restoring presence and awareness during shock or trauma
- Helps one stay calm in a crisis situation
- Calms and soothes people suffering from emotional shock or trauma
- Use when a person has been physically injured to overcome shock and promote tissue healing

Star of Bethlehem
- Useful remedy for shock or trauma, either current or past
- Helps people find comfort and reassurance from the spiritual world
- Brings calming and healing qualities into crisis situations

Impatiens
- Helps people who feel impatient, angry, irritated and intolerant
- For busy people, who don’t fully engage with others and the world around them
- Helps a person to flow more with life, instead of resisting it
- Increases patience with others and acceptance of others

Rock Rose
- Helpful for terror, panic and deep-seated fears
- Helps fear of death or annihilation
- Promotes feelings of courage and inner peace
- Helps a person face challenging circumstances with inner peace and tranquility

Clematis
- Helpful for people who avoid the present by daydreaming
- Also helps people who have ungrounded, impractical ideals
- Helps a person move their inspiration and dreams into their practical life
- Aids embodiment
Cherry Plum

- Helpful for the fear of loss of self-control, when a person is on the verge of mental or emotional breakdown
- Helps feelings of desperation
- Promotes spiritual surrender and trust and feeling guided and protected by a higher power

Arnica

- Helps to heal people that have experienced shock or trauma
- It can be especially helpful for unlocking many puzzling or psychosomatic illnesses, which do not respond to obvious treatment.
- Used as a short-term first-aid basis to allow rapid recovery from trauma.

Red Clover

- Helpful for people who get caught up in the “mob” mentality, the anxiety, fear, hysteria, etc. of the group
- Helps a person be calm and self-aware during crisis and emergency situations and disconnect from dysfunctional group energy

Other Remedies to Consider

- Capsicum and Lobelia
- Kava Kava
- Pulsatilla (homeopathic)
- Chamomile (children)
- Relaxing Nervine Formulas
- Skullcap
- Motherwort
- Blue Vervain
- Passion Flower
- Adaptagen Formulas
- Eleuthero
- Schizandra
- Adrenal Glandulars

Resources

- Bags to hold tincture bottles for first aid kit: http://www.1cascade.com/p/34044/herbal-tincture-bag-storage
- First Aid Certifications with Sam Coffman: http://thehumanpath.org/herbal-medicine-training/first-aid-certifications/
- When All Hell Breaks Loose and 98.6 Degrees: The Art of Keeping Your Ass Alive by Cody Lundin (http://www.codylundin.com/)
- Tom Brown's Books and Courses (http://www.truckerschool.com/)
- http://beprepared.com/
- Just in Case: How to Be Self-Sufficient When the Unexpected Happens by Kathy Harrison
- Wilderness First Aid: Emergency Care In Remote Locations Paperback by American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
- Where There Is No Doctor: A Village Health Care Handbook by David Werner and Carol Thuman
- Free webinars and information on preparedness by Steven Horne: http://stevenhorne.com/categories/webinars/preparedness.html

Comments, Questions and Answers

- Type your questions into the chat box