Bryan BEYOND 100

The Mental Health Impact of Disaster on the Local Hospital Staff and the Community

Dr. Dave Miers, PHD, LIPC

Senior Director, Behavioral Health Services

Bryan Medical Center

Definition of a Disaster

- A disaster is a natural or human-caused occurrence (e.g., hurricane, tornado, flood, tsunami, earthquake, explosion, hazardous materials accident, mass criminal victimization incident, war, transportation accident, fire, terrorist attack, famine, epidemic) that causes human suffering. A disaster creates a collective need that overwhelms local resources and requires additional assistance.

My Experience-Survived

- 1976 Big Thompson Canyon River Flood
- 144 deaths
- 250 Injuries
- 5 Missing
- Stalled storm in Estes park
- Sergeant Willis Hugh Purdy – Saved 100's of Lives

https://youtu.be/CDUChUTk7Ks

Hallam Tornado May 22, 2004

- F-4 Tornado
- At time widest tornado on record
- Most houses in Hallam destroyed - 158
- 37 injuries
- 1 Death
- American Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Response

Disaster Response

- Every disaster is different.
- Disasters affect individuals and the community.
- Response strategy depends on disaster characteristics.-Always include Mental Health component.
- A disaster causes disruptions and changes.

Cultural Awareness

- Cultural awareness is
  - Awareness of your own culture as a set of values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices, and the understanding that other cultures may be different from your own
  - Respect for the beliefs, languages, history, traditions, and behaviors of others
  - A quality that develops over time, usually involving increasing sensitivity and long-term commitment

Bryan BEYOND 100

Cultural Awareness

- Provide ongoing cultural awareness training to staff.
- Identify the various cultural groups or populations in need of services.
- Provide outreach to different cultures, ESL, ASL and vulnerable populations
- Ensure that services are accessible, appropriate, and equitable.
- Allow time to gain acceptance in a community.

Bryan BEYOND 100

Individualized Cultural Awareness

- Recognize the importance of culture, respect diversity, and take a nonjudgmental approach.
- Recognize differences in the expression of help-seeking, customs, traditions, and support networks.
- Learn local norms from community leaders.
- Recognize different experiences with and beliefs about healing, trauma, and loss.

Bryan BEYOND 100

Stress and Grief

- Everyone who experiences a disaster is affected by it in some way.
- People pull together during and after a disaster.
- Stress and grief are common reactions to uncommon situations.
- People’s natural resilience will support individual and collective recovery

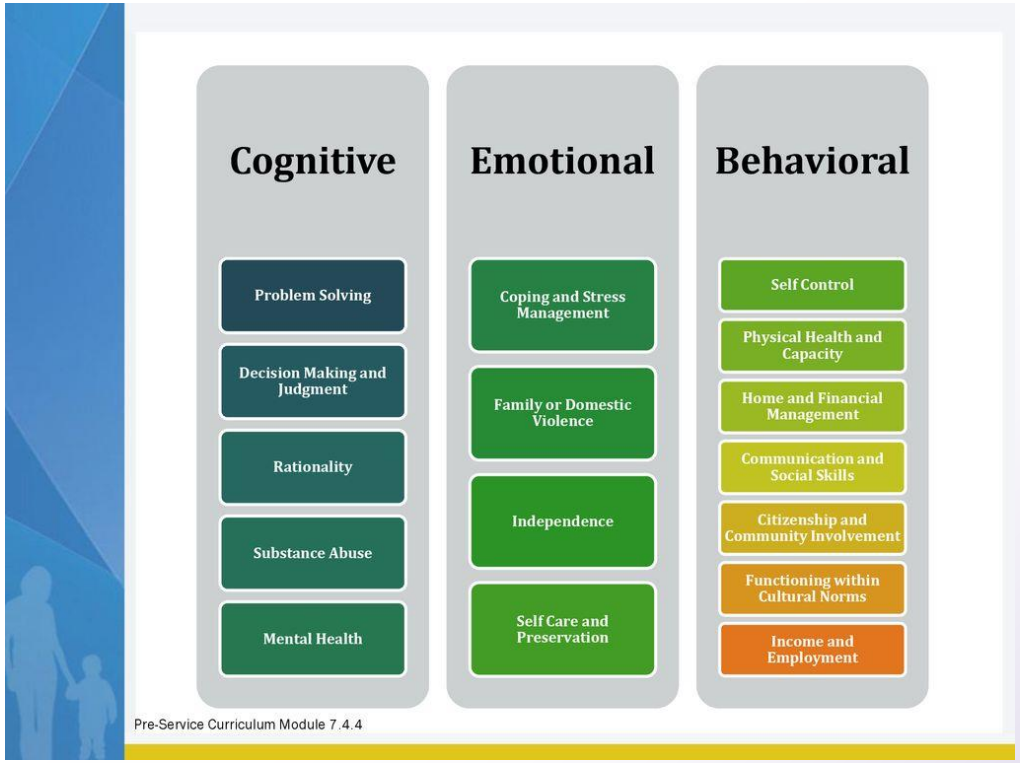
What is Stress?

- Stress encompasses the ways your body and brain respond to something you perceive as a demand in your environment.
- Likely experienced in stress management
- Short of time to recover between stressors
- Community that also is responding to the experience

Bryan BEYOND 100

Individual Reactions to Disaster

- Types of Individual Reactions
  - Physical
  - Emotional
  - Cognitive
  - Behavioral



Physical

- Gastrointestinal problems
- Headaches, aches, and pains
- Weight change
- Sweating or chills
- Tremors or muscle twitching
- Clumsiness, increased accidents
- Increased reactivity to stimuli such as sound and light (being easily startled)
- Chronic fatigue or sleep disturbances
- Immune system disorders
- Sexual dysfunction
- Positive responses can include alertness.

Bryan BEYOND 100

Emotional

- Emotional Reactions
  - Heroic, euphoric, or invulnerable feelings
  - Denial of emotion or disaster impacts
  - Anxiety or fear
  - Anger
  - Depression
  - Guilt
  - Apathy
  - Grief
  - Positive responses can include feeling challenged, involved, and pressured to act to improve conditions for other survivors and their community.

Cognitive

- Cognitive Reactions
  - Disorientation and confusion
  - Poor concentration
  - Difficulty setting priorities or making decisions
  - Loss of objectivity
  - Recurring dreams, nightmares, or flashbacks
  - Preoccupation with disaster
  - Positive responses can include group identification and sharpened perception.

Behavioral

- Behavioral Reactions
  - Change in activity level
  - Alcohol and drug use/misuse
  - Increased use of over-the-counter medications
  - Difficulty communicating or listening
  - Increased frequency of arguments
  - Declining job performance
  - Frequent crying
  - Avoidance of triggering places or activities
  - Positive responses can include unselfish and helping behavior.

Bryan BEYOND 100

Spiritual

- Spiritual beliefs influence how people make sense of the world:
  - Survivors may seek the comfort that comes from spiritual beliefs.
  - Spiritual beliefs will assist some survivors with coping and resilience.
  - Survivors may question their beliefs and life structures.

Bryan BEYOND 100

Effects of Disaster

- Many survivors (community members and healthcare workers) who signs of stress that last for relatively short periods that resolve on their own
- Some develop shorter and others longer term mental health concerns

Severe Reactions

- Depressive disorders
- Substance use or misuse
- Social isolation
- Acute stress disorder
- Anxiety disorders
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Dissociative disorders
- Paranoia
- Suicidal behavior

Severe Reactions Continued

- The severity of reactions is affected by the type of disaster, level of exposure to the disaster, and casualties associated with the disaster.
- Preexisting trauma may increase the risk of a severe reaction.
- Preexisting levels of support will affect the severity of reactions.

- https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/?ref=bryanh
- ONLINE SCREENINGS at Bryan Medical Center

Bryan Health

PRIVACY POLICY

Take a Mental Health Test

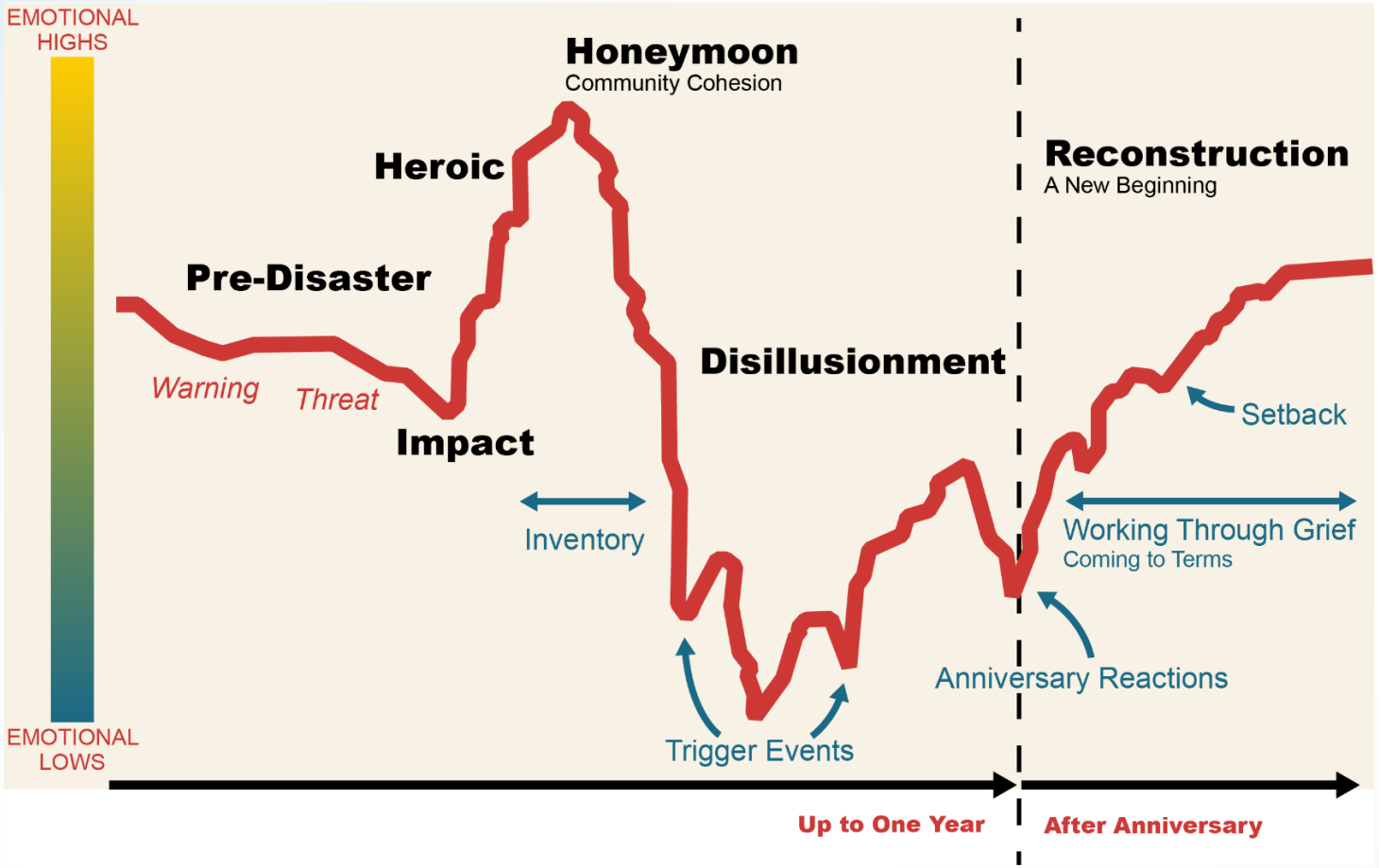
Online screening is one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition.

Mental health conditions, such as depression or anxiety, are real, common and treatable. And recovery is possible.

- DEPRESSION TEST +
- POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION TEST (NEW & EXPECTING PARENTS) +
- ANXIETY TEST +
- ADHD TEST +
- BIPOLAR TEST +
- PSYCHOSIS & SCHIZOPHRENIA TEST +
- PTSD TEST +
- EATING DISORDER TEST +
- ADDICTION TEST +
- PARENT TEST: YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH +
- YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH TEST +
- TEST DE DEPRESIÓN +

Bryan BEYOND 100

Typical Phases of a Disaster



Source: Zunin/Meyers, as cited in U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). *Training manual for mental health and human service workers in major disasters* (DHHS Publication 90–538). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA, CMHS.

Pre-Disaster and Impact

- Typical Phases of Disaster (cont.)
  - Pre-disaster phase
    - Disasters with no warning can cause feelings of vulnerability, lack of security, and loss of control; fear of future unpredicted tragedies; and inability to protect oneself and one's family.
    - Disasters with warning can cause guilt or self-blame for failure to heed warnings.
  - Impact phase
    - Reactions can range from shock to overt panic.
    - Initial confusion and disbelief are followed by a focus on self-preservation and family protection.

Bryan BEYOND 100

Heroic and Honeymoon

- Typical Phases of Disaster (cont.)
  - Heroic phase
    - Many survivors exhibit adrenaline-induced rescue behavior, as well as high activity with low productivity.
    - There is a sense of altruism.
  - Honeymoon phase
    - Disaster assistance is readily available.
    - Community bonding occurs.
    - Many are optimistic that everything will quickly return to normal.

Disillusionment and Reconstruction

- Typical Phases of Disaster (cont.)
  - Disillusionment phase
    - Stress and fatigue take a toll.
    - Optimism turns into discouragement.
    - Need for substance use services may increase.
    - The larger community returns to business as usual.
  - Reconstruction phase
    - Individuals and communities begin to assume responsibility for rebuilding their lives.
    - People begin adjusting to new circumstances.
    - There is a recognition of growth and opportunity.

Resilience

- What is resilience?
  - “ . . . Resilience [is] the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress . . . .”

American Psychological Association (APA), (2012). Building your resilience. https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience

Bryan BEYOND 100

Resilience

- Factors Affecting Resilience
  - Life situation
  - Individual traits and coping styles
  - Amount of prior experience with disaster
  - Amount of experience with trauma
  - Degree of family support and social support
  - Spiritual beliefs
  - Degree to which people perceive they have control and hope in their current situation
  - Availability of accurate information
  - Quality and nature of emergency response

Bryan BEYOND 100

Resilience and Growth

- Personal growth can occur as a result of surviving disaster.
- Examples of Personal Growth
  - Becoming closer to loved ones
  - Gaining faith in one's ability to rebuild a life
  - Becoming more spiritual or religious
  - Finding deeper meaning and purpose in life
  - Discovering inner strength

- Kessler, R. C., Galea, S., Jones, R. T., & Parker, H.A. (2006). Mental illness and suicidality after Hurricane Katrina. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, *84*(12), 930–939.

Bryan BEYOND 100

Risk and Protective Factors

- Risk factors for poorer behavioral health outcomes after disaster include female gender, middle age, youth, lower socioeconomic status, and being of a historically marginalized race or ethnicity, as well as pre-disaster trauma and adversity, greater disaster exposure, and greater resource loss in and after the disaster.
- Protective factors include older age, social support and connectedness, self-efficacy, and hope.

Bryan BEYOND 100

How to Assist Staff

- EAP Services
- Stress Debriefings
- Blogs and tips sheets incorporated into units (see handout)
- Resources placed on portal easily found on web
- Suicide Assessments and Substance Use assessments free to staff (or make sure they know how to access)

Nebraska Volunteers-Licensed Providers

- https://volunteers.ne.gov/ESAR-VHP/faces/jsp/login.xhtml

Nebraska Disaster Behavioral Health State Plan

- DBH-State-Plan-2022-Complete-Plan-Rev-with-signatures.pdf

Additional References

- Train Your CCP Staff | CCP Toolkit | SAMHSA – Core Training
- www.samhsa.gov

- Dr. Dave Miers, PhD, LIPC
- Senior Director, Behavioral Health Services
- 2300 South 16th Street
- Lincoln, NE 68502
- Dave.Miers@bryanhealth.org
- 402-481-5165