

# Psychological First Aid and Skills for Psychological Recovery

## What is Psychological First Aid?

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is an evidence-informed approach that is built on the concept of human resilience. PFA aims to reduce stress symptoms and assist in a healthy recovery following a traumatic event, natural disaster, public health emergency, or even a personal crisis.

## Why use PFA?

Emotional distress is not always as visible as a physical injury but is just as painful and debilitating. After going through a life altering experience, it is common to be affected emotionally. Everybody who experiences a disaster is touched by it. Reactions manifest differently at different periods of time during and after the incident.

Some common stress reactions include:

- Confusion
- Fear
- Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Sleep problems
- Physical pain
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Grief
- Aggressiveness
- Withdrawal
- Guilt
- Shaken religious faith
- Loss of confidence

While Physical First Aid is used to reduce physical discomfort due to a bodily injury, Psychological First Aid is a strategy to reduce the painful range of emotions and responses experienced by people exposed to high stress.

More information can be found at [Disaster Mental/Behavioral Health and Emergency Preparedness: EPR - Minnesota Dept. of Health \(state.mn.us\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/divers/diversity/behavioralhealth/emergency-preparedness/)

## What is Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR)?

Individuals affected by a disaster or traumatic incident, whether survivors, witnesses, or responders to such events, may struggle with or face new challenges in the weeks and months following the event. Although some individuals will need referral for treatment, most individuals can benefit from several skills-building contacts. SPR is an evidence-informed modular approach to help children, adolescents, adults, and families. SPR is designed to gain skills to reduce ongoing distress and effectively cope with post-disaster stresses and adversities.

## Why use SPR?

The principles and techniques of SPR meet four basic standards:

- Consistent with research evidence on risk and resilience following trauma.
- Applicable and practical in field settings.
- Appropriate for developmental levels across the lifespan.
- Culturally informed.

Basic Goals and Objectives of SPR:

- Protect the mental health of disaster survivors.
- Enhance survivors' abilities to address their needs and concerns.
- Teach skills to promote the recovery of children, adolescents, adults, and families.
- Prevent maladaptive behaviors while identifying and supporting adaptive behaviors.

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