



Worker Care

Self Help and Organizational
Support of Workers



Mission Statement

The vision of the National Worker Care Project is that the Canadian Red Cross will be a highly capable and resilient organization in mitigating the critical incident and cumulative stress its personnel faces in carrying out their services and responsibilities.



Worker Care Training

Module One

Self Care and Peer Support Training Objectives

The following are course objectives for persons taking the introductory self care and peer support worker care three hour course. The course participants will:

- 1. Have a general understanding of the Canadian Red Cross Worker Care Plan and Protocol.**
 - 2. Have a general understanding of the effects of a disaster on Red Cross personnel.**
 - 3. Have an understanding of and demonstrate the ability to conduct a self-assessment, self-screening, and self-monitoring.**
 - 4. Have an understanding of the principles of stress management and demonstrate the ability to develop one's own stress management plan.**
 - 5. Have an understanding of and the ability to demonstrate peer support.**
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Key Worker Care Guiding Principles

- 1. Red Cross personnel have the right to and responsibility to prepare for and practice the best self-care possible in their work.**
- 2. The Red Cross as an organization has the responsibility to take all reasonable steps to insure the well-being of its personnel.**
- 3. Meeting the occupational stress management needs of its personnel is a cost effective strategy relative to insuring the quality and sustainability of services for Red Cross clients.**
- 4. Effectively meeting the project's mission will require objectives and activities at individual, supervisory, administrative, organizational, and community levels.**
- 5. Increasing the competency and capacity of existing Red Cross programs, functions, and corresponding personnel to meet worker support needs will be more efficient, effective, sustainable, and acceptable than adding semi-independent parallel worker support services.**



A Few Important Terms and Concepts

GRIEF/LOSS/BEREAVEMENT

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

CUMULATIVE STRESS

VICARIOUS TRAUMATIZATION/
COMPASSION FATIGUE



Self Selection and Self Monitoring Guidelines

Checklist For Identifying Critical
Incident Stress and Cumulative
Stress

Work Site Characteristics Checklist



Causes of Worker Stress

- Poor preparation and briefing
- Being a part of a collective crisis
- Prolonged exposure to a disaster situation
- Physically difficult, exhausting, and dangerous tasks
- Chronic fatigue
- Feeling inadequate in dealing with the task
- Facing moral and ethical dilemmas
- Being detached from your support system (home/family)
- Feeling unsupported at your work site
- Unclear, inadequate or inconsistent supervision
- Witnessing or hearing about major losses
- Other



Signs of Stress and Burnout

- Wounded Ideals
- Cynicism
- Feeling unappreciated
- Loss of spirit
- Sadness, grief
- Grandiose beliefs
- Reckless behavior
- Neglecting safety and physical needs
- Mistrust of colleagues and supervisors
- Antisocial behaviors
- Chronic fatigue
- Inability to concentrate
- Somatic symptoms
- Sleep difficulties
- Inefficiency
- Self medicating (alcohol, tobacco, caffeine or drugs)
- Isolation
- Other



Worker Self-Care

- Identify major stressors
- Be assertive/stay organized
- Get Adequate rest
- Eat healthy balanced diet
- Do regular exercise
- Avoid excessive chemical use/self medication
- Use spiritual care
- Use constructive self-talk
- Use humor, lighten-up
- Practice relaxation
- Seek dialogue with friends and co-workers
- Listen and support others
- Develop realistic expectations
- Maintain contact with friends/family at home
- Seek support/counseling
- Other



Critical Incidents

- Multiple casualty accidents
- Hostage taking
- Suicide of co-worker
- Death of a co-worker (deliberate or accidental)
- Personal identification or acquaintanship with the victims
- Exposure to multiple deaths
- Risk of loss of life in conflict/terrorist situation
- Risk of loss of life in a natural disaster
- Sexual assault or other assaults
- Direct/indirect intimidation/threat/fear
- Other



Factors Influencing the Emotional Impact of a Disaster

Disaster Characteristics	Individual/Community Characteristics	Worker Characteristics
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<i>With warning v. Without warning</i>	<i>Individual characteristics</i>	<i>Expectations / experience</i>
<i>Time of day and duration</i>	<i>Social support systems</i>	<i>Diversity</i>
<i>Geographic location</i>	<i>Diversity / demographics</i>	<i>Physical / emotional health</i>
<i>Scope of impact</i>	<i>Disaster history</i>	<i>Personal issues</i>
<i>Natural v. man- made</i>	<i>Previous trauma</i>	<i>Media coverage</i>
<i>Post-disaster environment</i>	<i>Communications</i>	<i>Media coverage</i>



Critical Incident Coping

During the Critical Incident	After the Incident
<input type="checkbox"/> Recognize signs of stress	<input type="checkbox"/> Process the experience with co-workers
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus on immediate task	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice self-care (see WC I-10) Rest and eat well, exercise, maintain contact with others
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain dialogue with others	<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor your stress level and modify your self care plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtain support from other workers	<input type="checkbox"/> Obtain defusing and/or critical incident stress debriefing, if necessary



Worker Care Program

Self-Care Stress Management Planning Sheet

- I.** What are your personal signs that you are becoming overstressed?
- II.** What are your most useful stress management methods?
- III.** If you experience a critical incident, what additional stress management methods will you likely want to utilize?



Peer Support

Key Elements

1. Concern, empathy, love, respect, trust
2. Effective listening
3. Team work, cooperation, problem solving
4. Defusing following a critical incident



Critical Incident Defusings

Defusings are a much shorter, less formal, and less structured version of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. They are given within a few hours of the event. Usually, anywhere from one to four hours after an event is ideal.

Defusings last about 20 to 30 minutes. They are typically provided by peers, but may be led by a supervisor or worker care personnel if the peer decides that may be necessary. The main purpose is to stabilize a person so that he or she can be returned to normal service or allowed to go home without unusual stress. In some cases, personnel may not be able to finish a shift because of intense stress. Alternatives to continued work may need to be found. Supervisory staff must approve of any unusual decisions that would affect staffing of the unit. The defusing is a one-on-one or small-group process. Unlike formal critical incident stress debriefing, which usually includes all personnel involved in the incident, defusing concentrates on the most seriously affected workers.

A defusing allows for a little initial ventilation of the reaction to the event. It also provides stress-related information to the addressed person. Handouts may be used if they have been developed and available.



Steps of a Defusing

Following a Critical Incident

- Basic needs
- Change of venue
- Ventilation Opportunity
- Structure
- Rest
- Information
- Self-care plan
- Follow-up



Worker Care Related Brochures Available for Personnel

(others will likely be added prior to the pilot training in 2006)

The following three brochures are products of the American Red Cross, are used regularly with personnel serving in their domestic disaster services assignments, and have been used at times in Canadian Red Cross disaster assignments.

- 1. *Coping With Disaster – Emotional Health Issues for Disaster Workers on Assignment: Workers on Assignment***
- 2. *Coping With Disaster – Emotional Health Issues for Families of Disaster Workers: Families of Workers***
- 3. *Coping With Disaster – Returning Home from a Disaster Assignment: Workers Returning Home***