

HOW TO BE HELPFUL AFTER A TRAUMATIC INCIDENT SEVEN SIMPLE TIPS

Developed by Debra Finnegan- Suler, Ph.D.

Director CenterPoint Counseling Center

www.centerpoint.com

1. Stay calm. Stay centered. Keep it basic! IF you are calm, centered and kind the injured or traumatized person can see that in spite of what has just happened, the world is not falling apart.
2. Provide physical comfort and support: get them a chair, a blanket, water, stuffed animal, or pillow. If appropriate, put a hand lightly on their shoulder. Allow them to be near the people they trust most. They can tell you who they want. Let them know their trusted people are on the way to be with them and will get there soon.
3. Provide gentle support for their emotional and physical reactions: Trembling, shaking, crying, not crying, laughing, being silent, talking a lot --- Tell them, "that's fine." Their body may know just what it needs to do to discharge the tremendous energy that has been released into their system. Let them know that all of that is "just fine," "perfectly normal," and "good."
4. Protect them by creating a low stimulation, quiet zone: After a traumatic event we are overwhelmed and over stimulated. We are attempting to process all the information that has impinged on our normal world. Protect them from unnecessary questions, prying eyes, commotion.
5. Relieve them of responsibilities and provide concrete help. "You don't have to worry, we are taking care of it." "We will let them know." "We're going to get your books for you."
6. Follow their instructions as much and as respectfully as possible. They know more than you about what feels right and helpful. Help them to regain a sense of having some control and self-efficacy. They are reminded that they are worthy of respect.
7. Say only the most thoughtful, respectful, recovery oriented things: "Good" "You're doing fine." "We're here to help you." "Don't worry." "We're gonna take care of you." "You are good." "You are brave." "Good girl." "You did a good job." "It's over." "You're ok." Things you say in the aftermath of a traumatic event are taken into the mind in a very concrete way. Provide good thoughts about themselves, the people they can rely on and the world.

Support – Protect – Respect - Nurture