



General Emotional Distress Case Study Worksheet

Scenario 1

You are on duty at a major community event in the CBD. A mother presents to your post in hysterics, she explains that she has lost her child somewhere in the crowd. You radio event staff who commence a search. Your task is to support and calm the mother.

Scenario 2

You have been deployed to an evacuation centre after a natural disaster such as a flood. You are confronted with hundreds of families who have lost their homes and possessions, are cold and wet and do not know the whereabouts of many of their loved ones. Your task is to support and calm them.

Management Principles

1. DRABCD
2. Engage with the distressed person.
 - a. Approach the person slowly and introduce yourself with your name and title.
3. Promote calm
 - a. Provide an environment (as far as is practical) that is removed from stressful situations or exposure to sights, sounds and smells of emergency.
 - b. Listen to those who want to talk, but never pressure those who do not want to.
4. Promote connectedness.
 - a. Help people contact friends and loved ones.
 - b. Keep families together and children with parents wherever possible.
5. Promote a sense of control.
 - a. Support the person to do things that are active (rather than passive, such as simply waiting), practical (using available resources), and familiar (drawing on well-learned behaviours that do not require new learning). Examples provided below.
6. Offer practical assistance.
 - a. Establish the person's most pressing concern and ways that you can assist them with it. Examples provided below.

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Action	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
<i>DRABCD</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check for dangers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider dangers such as cold/wet clothes, injuries masked by emotional distress etc.
<i>Engagement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Hello, my name is Scott. I'm a St. John Ambulance first aider." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Hello, my name is Scott. I'm a St. John Ambulance first aider."
<i>Promote calm</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring the mother inside the first aid post or a quiet room. Allow the mother to express her distress and reflect back to her that you have heard and understood her. "I can see that you are feeling very worried about your son." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a warm, dry place with blankets and seats that is away from media coverage of the event or other distressing sights/sounds of emergency. Sit quietly and listen to any person who wants to talk. Reflect back to them that you have heard and understood, "I see that you are distraught about the whereabouts of your relatives, and that you haven't seen anything like this before."
<i>Promote connectedness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the mother whether there is anyone that you can help her contact (eg: child's father). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where possible, assist persons contact family and friends. Assist disaster response staff disseminate information with

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		regard to the safety and wellbeing of persons in other areas.
<i>Promote a sense of control</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Do not</u> instruct the mother to simply sit down and wait, rather • ask the mother to participate in search efforts. For example, liaising with event security, brainstorming where the child may go if lost etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support people to do things that are active, practical and familiar. For example, support persons to organise a children's play group in the evacuation centre to occupy the children. This is something that people can do to increase their sense of control over the situation.
<i>Practical assistance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support search efforts where possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible assist persons address their pressing concerns.