

EFA Is Powerful

1. **Providing a survivor with Emotional First Aid is not a complicated process.** All of the emotional first aid skills are simple, and the interaction between the helper and the survivor is usually brief.

There is a tendency to believe that this brief and simple interaction is “no big deal”. Nothing can be further from the truth. Our organization has found (somewhat to our surprise) that the emotional first aid our volunteers provide to survivors has a lasting and profound affect. In the thousands of thank you letters we have received over the years, survivors use phrases like: *“your volunteer was an angel”; “I’ll never forget the volunteer”; “I would not have survived without the volunteer”*.

Here are a few actual quotes from survivors about the help they received from our volunteers . . .

- *“The volunteer was truly a life saver. I am so thankful there are people like you that chose to volunteer and help those of us in such pain and disbelief.”*
- *“The volunteer really meant a lot to my husband and I. We talked about her for quite awhile afterwards and told numerous people about her.”*
- *“Our experience with your organization in our time of need was beyond words. I have often read about the love of strangers in the world. While in the hospital dealing with the unexpected death of a family member, I experienced that loving kindness first hand.”*
- *“My volunteer made a horrible time bearable. I would never have comprehended the details presented without her sweet and knowledgeable guidance.”*

2. **Why does such a simple brief relationship between helper and survivor have such a powerful affect on the survivor?**

The answer lies in what the survivor is experiencing after a tragic event. The survivor is sensitive, vulnerable and lost. When someone reaches out to help, the survivor is extremely grateful.

Although it appears that survivors are in shock and don’t know what is happening around them, in fact they are very sensitive to what is happening. Survivors hear and remember “little” things like the helper’s tone of voice; the touch provided by the helper; and the overall attitude of the helper. If the helper’s words, actions and

demeanor are not helpful, the survivor will feel “reinjured” by the helper. If on the other hand, the helper practices effective emotional first aid, the survivor will be very grateful.

3. **EFA: A Lasting Affect**

A survivor who receives emotional first aid is not only grateful for the **immediate** assistance the helper provided but the helper becomes a **permanent** part of the survivor’s memory of the tragic event and its aftermath. When the survivor “relives” the tragic event, the memory of *“the help I received from that kind helper”* will be a soothing part of the survivor’s memory tape. It’s not an exaggeration to describe a helper who provides emotional first aid as a “healer”. The immediate support the helper provides is as important to the survivor’s recovery as the help that may be provided by a support group, a member of the clergy or a professional counselor later.

“Minutes of skillful support by
any sensitive person
immediately after the trauma
can be worth more than hours of
professional counseling later.”

- Bard and Sanger – The Crime Victim’s Book