

Emotional First Aid

Guiding Principles

1. Be aware of yourself.

Don't impose your values, beliefs, opinions or advice on the survivor. Remember it's their tragedy that it should go their way, not yours.

2. Allow the survivor to regain control.

Tragic events take away the survivors sense of control. The survivor's basic challenge is to regain that sense of control. You can help by allowing him to make as many decisions and take as much action as possible. Don't make one of the biggest mistakes helpers: Taking over.

3. It's all about meeting the needs of the survivor.

If you listen for what the survivor needs and act to meet those needs, you will be an effective helper.

4. Remember that everyone grieves differently.

Don't judge how a survivor is reacting. If you find survivors judging each other's reactions say "*everyone grieves differently*".

5. Acknowledge the survivor's plight.

Don't try to diminish the enormity of the event. Ask the survivor about his experience, and validate it.

6. Remember that your overall gentle caring demeanor is more important to the survivor than what you say or do.