

# ***The Horrible Hours***

To really understand the importance of Emotional First Aid, you need to understand what we call *The Horrible Hours*. The *Horrible Hours* are those first few hours immediately following a tragic event. There are 5 aspects of these *Horrible Hours* which make it the terrible time that it is, and that make it important for you to be there as soon as possible.

- #1 The *Horrible Hours* involve **a huge loss** in a person's life. It may be the loss of a spouse of 50 years, the loss of a child or the loss of a home. We experience many losses as we go through our daily lives, but a tragic event can be described as the BIG ONE.
- #2 The *Horrible Hours* are something that the survivor **never planned for**. He was taken totally by surprise and therefore is totally unprepared for.
- #3 Survivors usually don't experience their *Horrible Hours* in a nice, quiet and familiar environment. Rather, the **environment is often chaotic**. It may be in a noisy emergency department, or on the side of a freeway or in the person's home with emergency personnel and friends and family coming and going.
- #4 Often, the person experiencing the *Horrible Hours* is **alone**. The survivor's support system has not gotten there yet. When you arrive, it's important to convey "*you are not alone now*".
- #5 The person experiencing the *Horrible Hours* is often asked to make **dreadful decisions** ...
  - ... "*What mortuary should I use to bury my dead child?*"
  - ... "*Should I donate his organs?*"
  - ... "*How should I tell my child his father killed himself?*"Unfortunately, the person faced with these dreadful decisions does not have the experience, the information, or the clear thinking to make them.

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These horrible situations leave survivors devastated. Each person reacts differently, but it's very common for survivors to be shocked, confused, shaking, sobbing, angry, guilty and questioning. But the word which best characterizes survivors is **lost**.