

Shelter Challenges - Behavioral Health Support for Patients, Caregivers and Yourself

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What brings people to the shelter?

Why would people be distressed in
the shelter?

Reasons for distress

- Disaster may bring up memories of previous events
- Sense of hopelessness/helplessness
- All the unknowns
- Current weather conditions
- Pre-existing mental health disorders
- Not getting along with other shelter residents
- Physical ailments getting worse

Coming to the shelter can be
traumatizing – recognize this is a scary
experience for many folks

When people are frightened or
threatened, a special system in the brain
takes over...

Fright, Flight, or Fight

- When we are experiencing stress, the limbic part of our brain kicks into the “fright , flight or fight” mode.
- Normally, this is a useful brain function.
- But, for a person experiencing trauma this area of the brain gets overused.

A person may respond as if they are in danger even when they're not.

Common Signs of Trauma - emotions

- Depressed
- Anxious
- Frustrated
- Numb
- Angry

Common Signs of Trauma - behaviors

- 'Thousand Yard Stare'
- Aggression (bullying, bossiness)
- Tearfulness
- Irritability
- Forgetfulness
- Sleeping too much/not sleeping at all
- Hypervigilient
- Meltdowns (tantrums or over-reactions)

What Can I Do??

- Listen
 - Practice reflective listening, supportive statements
- Ask if specific help is needed – food, water, medical supplies, etc.

Use a calm tone

Maintain focus on that interaction

Don't argue! (Perception is reality!)

Provide reality check

What Else Can I Do??

- Remind person of his/her resilience
- Practice calming techniques (controlled breathing)
- Provide information (if you have it, and if it's appropriate)
- Link with services (if available)
- Offer a distraction if one is wanted/needed

When You Need a Break (a.k.a. Vicarious Trauma)

Warning signs:

General negative attitude

Irritability

Fearfulness

Numbness

Decreased sense of safety

Avoidance

Disillusionment

Vicarious Trauma

Self-Care does not have to be
time-consuming

If you only have ...

2 minutes

What can you do??

2 Minutes...

- Breathe
- Stretch
- Daydream
- Laugh
- Doodle
- Acknowledge one of your accomplishments
- Compliment yourself
- Look out the window
- Spend time with your pet
- Share a favorite joke

5 minutes?

What can you do??

5 Minutes...

- Listen to music
- Have a cleansing cry
- Chat with a co-worker
- Sing out loud
- Jot down dreams
- Step outside for fresh air
- Enjoy a snack or make a cup of coffee/tea

10 minutes

What can you do??

10 Minutes...

- Evaluate your day
- Write in a journal
- Call a friend
- Meditate
- Tidy your work area
- Say a prayer
- Assess your self care
- Draw a picture
- Listen to soothing sounds
- Surf the web
- Read a magazine

30 Minutes

What can you do??

30 Minutes...

- Exercise
- Eat lunch with a co-worker
- Read non-work related literature
- Spend time in nature
- Practice yoga
- Read a book
- Put together a puzzle

Self Care Kit Suggestions

- Earplugs
- Comfortable clothes
- Tea bags / single serve coffee packets
- Adult coloring book/pencils

What's in your bag?