

# Psychological first aid: Pocket guide

## WHAT IS PFA?

Psychological first aid (PFA) describes a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support.



Providing PFA responsibly means:

1. Respect safety, dignity and rights.
2. Adapt what you do to take account of the person's culture.
3. Be aware of other emergency response measures.
4. Look after yourself.

- PREPARE**
- » Learn about the crisis event.
  - » Learn about available services and supports.
  - » Learn about safety and security concerns.

## PFA ACTION PRINCIPLES:

- LOOK**
- » Check for safety.
  - » Check for people with obvious urgent basic needs.
  - » Check for people with serious distress reactions.



- LISTEN**
- » Approach people who may need support.
  - » Ask about people's needs and concerns.
  - » Listen to people, and help them to feel calm.



- LINK**
- » Help people address basic needs and access services.
  - » Help people cope with problems.
  - » Give information.
  - » Connect people with loved ones and social support.



## ETHICS:

Ethical do's and don'ts are offered as guidance to avoid causing further harm to the person, to provide the best care possible and to act only in their best interest. Offer help in ways that are most appropriate and comfortable to the people you are supporting. Consider what this ethical guidance means in terms of your cultural context.

### Do's ✓

- » Be honest and trustworthy.
- » Respect people's right to make their own decisions.
- » Be aware of and set aside your own biases and prejudices.
- » Make it clear to people that even if they refuse help now, they can still access help in the future.
- » Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential, if this is appropriate.
- » Behave appropriately by considering the person's culture, age and gender.

### DON'TS X

- » Don't exploit your relationship as a helper.
- » Don't ask the person for any money or favour for helping them.
- » Don't make false promises or give false information.
- » Don't exaggerate your skills.
- » Don't force help on people, and don't be intrusive or pushy.
- » Don't pressure people to tell you their story.
- » Don't share the person's story with others.
- » Don't judge the person for their actions or feelings.

## PEOPLE WHO NEED MORE THAN PFA ALONE:

Some people will need much more than PFA alone. Know your limits and ask for help from others who can provide medical or other assistance to save life.

### PEOPLE WHO NEED MORE ADVANCED SUPPORT IMMEDIATELY:

- » People with serious, life-threatening injuries who need emergency medical care.
- » People who are so upset that they cannot care for themselves or their children.
- » People who may hurt themselves.
- » People who may hurt others.