



## EFL “Brieflet”: Engaging with Emergency

There are three core skill sets that leaders need to apply when leading effective engagement with emergency.

### Skill Set One: “KOPE” Before the Emergency

1. **Know the team** - their needs and strengths; contact details; support people
2. **Orient team to each other** - fostering mutual responsibility & attachment
3. **Practise** - what to do in an emergency, regularly; and be aware of organizational protocols
4. **Educate** - each other about possible reactions, coping strategies, organizational and other support

### Skill Set Two: “SAFE” During the Emergency

1. **Seek safety** - for you and your team
2. **Advise** - your team of what is happening; update previously identified organizational and team contacts
3. **Facilitate** - team systems and skills to monitor, support and record individual needs (consider keeping a diary)
4. **Expect** - adverse reactions, including your own, and that you will need to engage support for yourself, as well as for your team

### Skill Set Three: “LEARN” Immediately After the Emergency

1. **Learn** - what happened, how did you cope, how did the team cope, what needs to happen now?
2. **Encourage** - team re-connection to each other, their coping strategies and their support systems
3. **Anticipate** - behaviour and mood changes, including: shock, anger, grief, guilt, sadness, hopelessness, interpersonal problems, eating and/or sleeping habit changes, substance abuse
4. **Remember** - to monitor and respond appropriately to your own needs for support
5. **Normalise** - *Psychological First Aid* as an option for you and your staff to access for information and support

*Psychological First Aid aims to reduce initial distress, meet current needs, promote flexible coping and encourage adjustment. It occurs in the first hours, days and weeks following emergency ... (APS, 2013).* It is important to remember that different people experience a different range of cognitive, interpersonal, emotional and physical reactions following an emergency. The core goals of Psychological First Aid (PFA) are to restore a sense of **calm, safety, connection, self-efficacy and hope**. PFA therefore recognises that offering cups of tea and other basic practical support can be as important to promoting natural recovery as the provision of advice and emotional support.

There are eight stages to Psychological First Aid (from Brymer et al, 2006):

1. Contact and engagement: compassionate engagement with, and initiation of response to, need to rebuild team communication and attachment
2. Safety and comfort: ensure immediate physical/emotional safety/security
3. Stabilisation: acknowledge sense of overwhelm/disorientation; bring calm and orientation
4. Information gathering: triage immediate concerns
5. Practical assistance: in relation to immediate needs
6. Connection with social supports: encourage staff to link with primary supports at work/home; be carefully responsive to differences in the way individuals re-prioritise their work/home/community lives and routines; discuss achievable task-setting and work schedules
7. Information on coping support: education about stress reactions and adaptive coping including: social routines, healthcare, hobbies, fun, relaxation, meditation
8. Linkage with collaborative services: what's available internally and externally, now and in the future - and in a way that respects and builds self-efficacy

#### Sources

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