



# Psychological First Aid

The Psychological First Aid (PFA) framework aims to reduce stress symptoms and assist in healthy recovery by providing practical help and supporting resilience following a traumatic event, natural disaster, public health emergency, or personal crisis. PFA is an evidence-informed approach that is built upon the concept of human resilience, integrating public health and individual psychology.

## 5 PILLARS OF THE PFA FRAMEWORK:

### 1. SAFETY

- Promote physical and emotional safety
- Meet basic survival needs (food, water, shelter, and restroom)
- Provide simple and accurate information
- Repeat information as often as necessary
- Identify resources for immediate safety and support

### 2. COMFORT

- Provide a sense of calm and comfort with a compassionate presence
- Practice active listening
- Refrain from prying for details about the event
- Deploy stress reduction techniques
- Provide basic information on common stress reactions and healthy ways to cope

### 3. CONNECTION

- Encourage connection and connectedness
- Assist in reconnecting friends and loved ones
- Keep children with trusted relatives/friends whenever possible
- Ask and answer questions
- Connect to community resources, providing referrals as needed

### 4. SELF-EMPOWERMENT

- Introduce a sense of control and encourage self-empowerment
- Clarify disaster information, sharing facts about the event

- Brainstorm practical problem solving and what is in their control
- Promote resilience and self-care
- Brainstorm ways to establish a “new normal” with activities or routines in their control

### 5. HOPE

- Present the possibility of hope for the future
- Share ways to get involved in the community recovery process
- Validate and normalize that it’s ok if one can’t feel or imagine hope in a moment of crisis
- Refrain from toxic positivity or the need to find a “silver lining” in the traumatic experience
- Emphasize resilience: moving forward one day at a time

## SELF-CARE AND RESILIENCE FOR THE PFA PROVIDER

- Maintain awareness of your physical and emotional ability to effectively support others
- Understand the nature of the event
- Learn what triggers stress responses in yourself
- Know what healthy coping or self-care best supports you
- Prioritize your self-care and resiliency on a regular basis
- Expect a recovery period after an incident
- Identify your support system and use it

## WHEN IN DOUBT, REFER OUT!