



# Resiliency in the Face of Disaster: Strategies for Survivors and Responders

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# Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR)

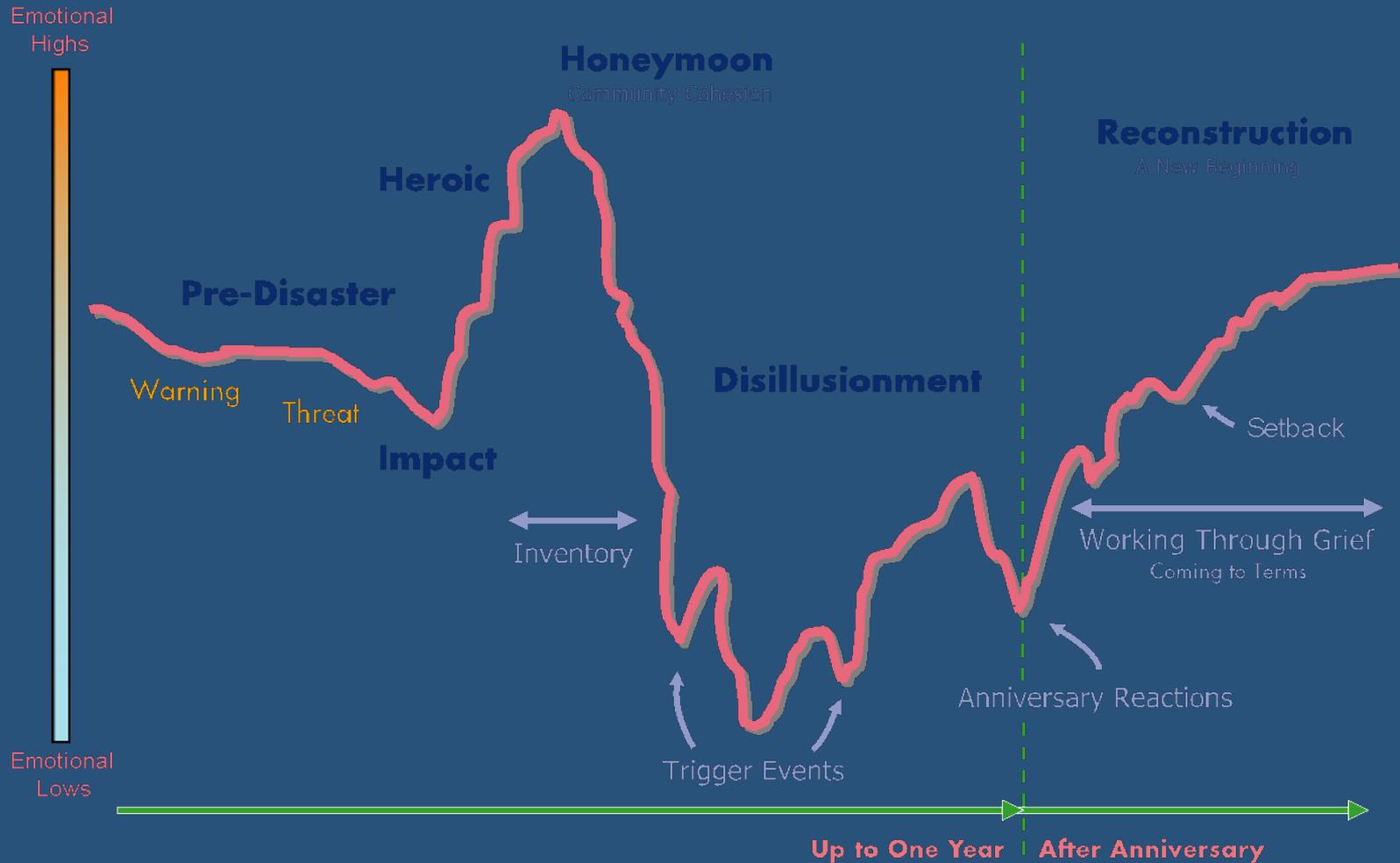


## Ensuring Resiliency during Disasters

- Mitigate hazards
- Enhance preparedness
- Ensure effective emergency response
- Rapidly recover

# What We Know About Disaster Reactions

## Typical phases of disaster



# Human Reactions to Disasters



- Everyone who experiences a disaster is affected by it
- People pull together during and after a disaster
- Stress and grief are common reactions to uncommon situations
- People's natural resilience will support individual and collective recovery

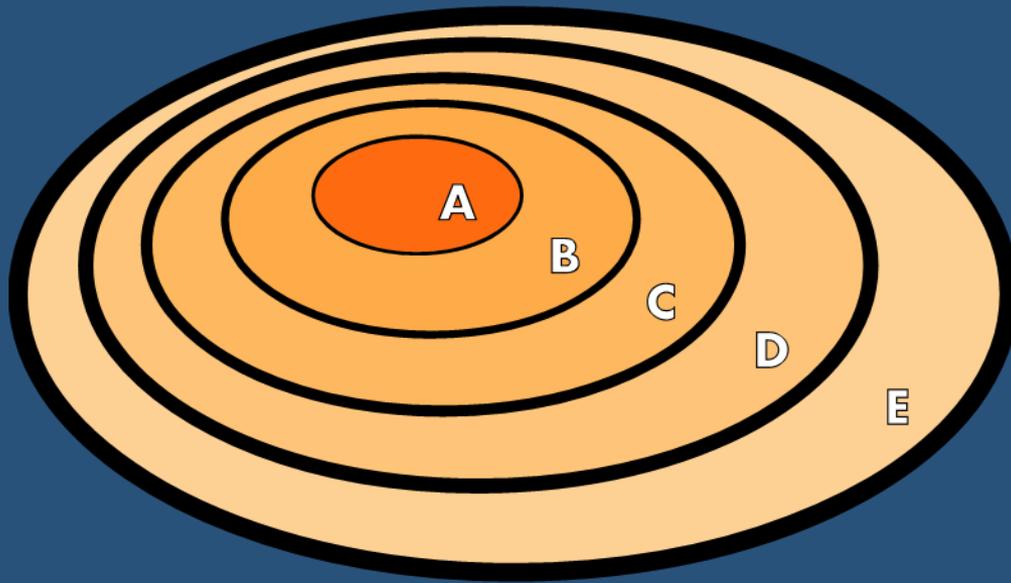
# Human Reactions to Disasters, con't



- Most will naturally recover
- Some will have serious or severe reactions
- Few will develop diagnosable conditions
- Most do not seek treatment
- Survivors often reject help



# Risk Factors-Population Exposure Model:



- A. Injured survivors, bereaved family members
- B. Survivors with high exposure to disaster trauma, or evacuated from disaster zones
- C. Bereaved extended family and friends, first responders
- D. People who lost homes, jobs, and possessions; people with preexisting trauma and dysfunction; at-risk groups; other disaster responders
- E. Affected people from the larger community

# Two Types of Reactions



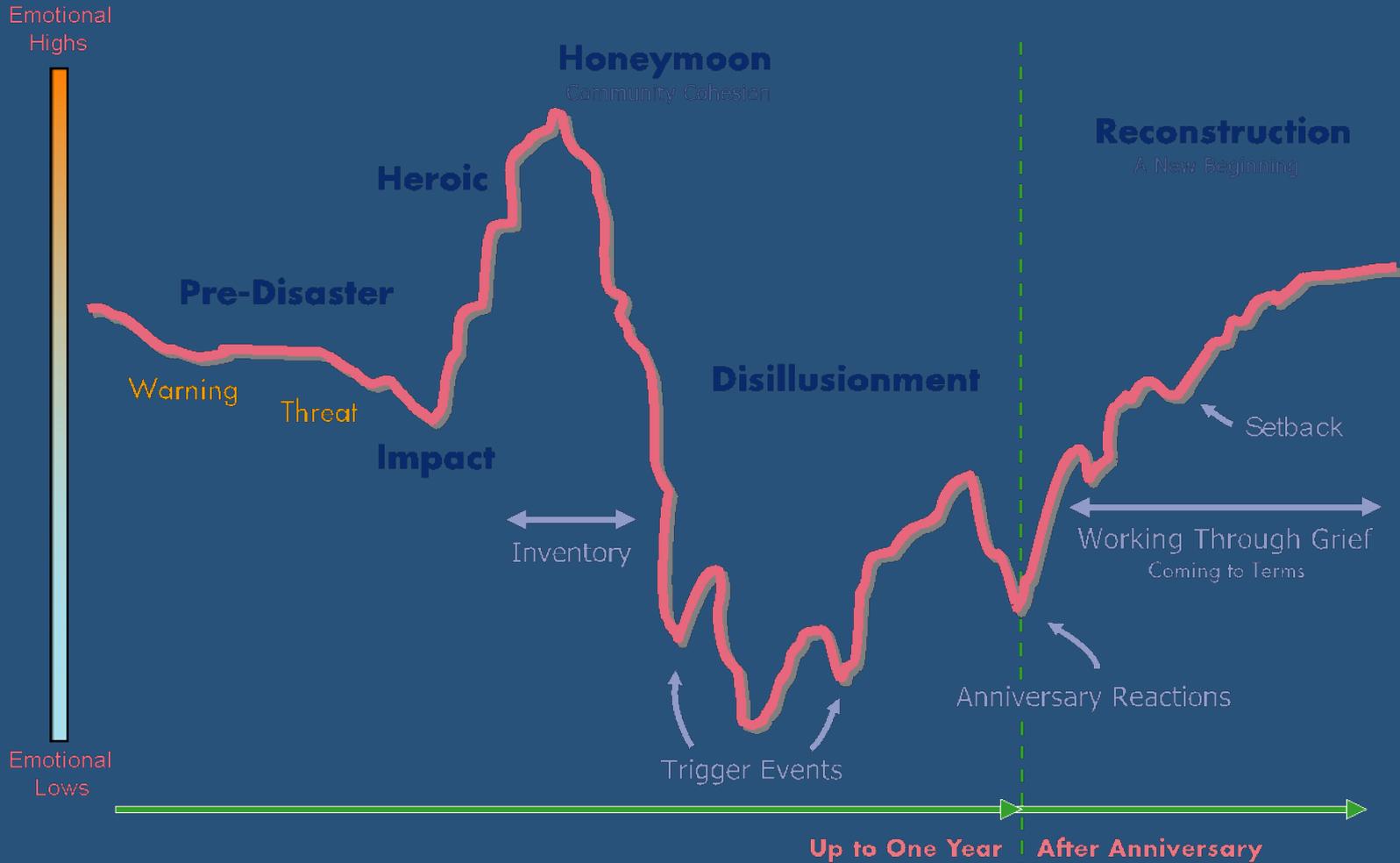
- Individual reactions:
  - May cause stress and grief.
  - May cause fatigue, irritability, hopelessness, and relationship conflicts.
- Collective reactions:
  - May damage community support.
  - May affect individual coping.

# Individual Reactions



- Physical
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Behavioral

# Collective Reactions





# Signs of Severe Distress

- Depression, sadness, feelings of hopelessness
- Headaches, stomach problems
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Difficulty sleeping
- Poor work performance
- Reluctance to leave home
- Fear of Crowds, strangers, or being alone
- Increase substance use/abuse
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Suicidal Ideations

# Characteristics of Disaster Responders



- May have the same disaster reactions as the general population
- Sometimes they are survivors of the disaster and may have experienced associated trauma
- Distinct from the general population and value group identity

# Characteristics of Disaster Responders



- Were assigned to or elected to be part of an organized response to a catastrophic event
- Can be traditional like police officers or fire fighters
- Can be non-traditional like public health, construction or transportation workers
- Self-reliant and often reluctant to seek help

# Characteristics of Disaster Responders



## Stress reactions can result from:

- Life threatening danger
- Exposure to bodily injury or dead bodies
- Extreme fatigue, weather exposure, sleep deprivation
- Extended exposure to danger, loss, or emotional and physical strain

# Disaster Responders' Experiences and Reactions



## Key Terms:

- Compassion Fatigue
- Burnout
- Vicarious Trauma

# Compassion Fatigue



## Is characterized by:

- Work-related, secondary exposure to extremely stressful events
- Being exposed to traumatic events through the experience of those you are helping
- Symptoms with a rapid onset and associated with a particular event
- Fear, difficulty sleeping, recurring upsetting images, avoidance of reminders of the event

# Burnout



## Is characterized by:

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Difficulties in dealing with work or effectiveness
- Gradual onset of negative feelings
- Feelings that your efforts make no difference
- Very high workload
- Non-supportive work environment

*Source: Hudnall-Stamm, The ProQOL Manual, 2005*

# Vicarious Trauma



## Is characterized by:

- A stress reaction experienced by professionals who are exposed to stories of traumatic events by those seeking help
- Long lasting changes in how these professionals view themselves, others, and the world
- Symptoms similar to, but not usually as severe as, posttraumatic stress disorder

● *Source: US Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime*

# Resilience



## What is resilience?

- Resilience is the ability to recover from or adjust to misfortune or change.

# Resilience



## Factors affecting resilience:

- Life situation
- Individual traits and coping styles
- Disaster and trauma experience
- Family and social support
- Spiritual beliefs
- Presence of perceived control, and hope
- Availability of accurate information
- An effective and caring emergency response

# Individual Resilience



## Ten ways to improve resilience:

- Make connections
- Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems
- Accept change as a part of living
- Move toward your goals
- Take decisive actions
- Look for opportunities for self-discovery
- Nurture a positive view of yourself
- Keep things in perspective
- Maintain a hopeful outlook
- Take care of yourself



# Individual Resilience

## Strategies to improve resilience:

- Make a realistic plan to manage and prioritize tasks
- Making a list of tasks will increase feelings of control and self-reliance
- Do the most important things first:
  - Find a safe place to stay
  - Get water and food
  - Tell family where you are and how they can contact you
  - Get papers for your property, insurance, bank, medical records, and job qualifications
- Know that it will take time to get your life in order
- Be patient with yourself as well as others



# Individual Resilience

## Strategies to improve resilience:

- Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water
- Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol
- Do not use drugs
- Get enough sleep and time to rest
- Engage in physical activity
- Stay active and maintain your daily routine
- Spend time with family and friends
- Participate in memorials, rituals, and support groups

# Individual Resilience



## Strategies to improve resilience:

- Use practical ways to relax
- Stretch or meditate
- When engaging in stressful activities, take frequent breaks
- Engage in personal time: read, cook, listen to music, or take a bath
- Talk to family or friends about your feelings

# Individual Resilience



## Strategies to improve resilience:

- Recognize and heed early warning signs of distress
- Recognize how past experiences affect the reactions to the current event
- Use successful coping strategies from past events
- Acknowledge feelings; don't ignore them
- Seek help if necessary

# Community Resilience



- Boost and protect naturally occurring social supports
- Build social skills and mutual support
- Provide leaders and survivors with knowledge, tools, and skills to acquire needed supports
- Facilitate locally-driven measures to:
  - Assess and address vulnerabilities to hazards
  - Identify and invest in networks of assistance and information
  - Set achievable goals
  - Enhance capacities to solve problems
  - Collectively tell the community's story
  - Re-establish rhythms and routines
  - Engage in collective rituals (i.e., anniversary rituals)

# Ensuring Resiliency During Disasters : What Can We Do?



## Promoting resilience and recovery:

- Services to survivors can be planned and implemented in ways that naturally promote resilience and recovery
- Five essential elements for service delivery are:
  1. Promote a sense of safety
  2. Promote calming
  3. Promote sense of self– and collective efficacy
  4. Promote connectedness
  5. Promote hope

# Ensuring Resiliency During Disasters : What Can We Do?



## 1. Promote a sense of safety

### Action steps:

- Bring survivors to a safe place and tell them that it is safe
- Accurately describe threats and encourage perception of safety when serious threat has passed
- Encourage distressed survivors to limit viewing of graphic, traumatic images in the media

# Ensuring Resiliency During Disasters : What Can We Do?



## 2. Promote calming

### Action steps:

- Help survivors directly solve immediate concerns
- If known, provide information on the safety of family and friends and likelihood of further danger
- Encourage community outreach and education regarding disaster reactions, anxiety management, and limiting excessive media exposure

# Ensuring Resiliency During Disasters : What Can We Do?



## 3. Promote sense of self– and collective efficacy

### Action steps:

- To the extent possible, involve survivors in decisions regarding policy, use of resources, and community rebuilding
- Promote healing activities that are organized by the community: meetings, rallies, community rituals
- Include children in community recovery and encourage resumption of school communities

# Ensuring Resiliency During Disasters : What Can We Do?



## 4. Promote connectedness

### Action steps:

- Help survivors connect with family and friends
- Help children connect with parents
- If possible, address negative social dynamics: mistrust, impatience with recovery, and us/them thinking

# Ensuring Resiliency During Disasters : What Can We Do?



## 5. Promote hope

### Action steps:

- Encourage rebuilding of local economies
- Support advocacy programs that assist survivors with the challenges of recovery
- Build individual and community strengths
- Community institutions should help with support systems, acceptance, and positive goals

# Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR)



## Ensuring Resiliency during Disasters

- Mitigate hazards: strengthen capacity to withstand threats and disasters
- Enhance preparedness: engage society in improving preparedness
- Ensure effective emergency response: strengthen nationwide capacity
- Rapidly recover: improve nations ability to adapt and recover

# Ensuring Resiliency during Disasters: What can leadership do?



- Understand disaster reactions
- Help foster resilience
- Help improve effective coping strategies
- Provide practical assistance by promoting:
  - A sense of safety
  - Calming
  - Sense of self– and collective efficacy
  - Connectedness
  - Hope

*Source: CDC, Disaster Mental Health for Responders: Key Principles, Issues and Questions, 2005*

# Ensuring Resiliency during Disasters:

## What can leadership do?



- Ensure that first responders have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities
- Support colleagues, family members, and survivors
- Set priorities and allocate resources effectively
- Encourage and support effective self-care and stress management
- Provide information on how to seek help when needed

# Ensuring Resiliency during Disasters: What can leadership do?



- Provide training and education to entire workforce
- Provide ongoing supervision and promotion of self-care and stress management
- Plan and implement services so they are responsive to survivors' needs