

# Crisis Management

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# Preparing for the worst

- Design a plan:
- Who: takes charge, contacts families, deals with students, contacts the press
- What: has to be done
- When: to communicate, organize a debriefing
- Group cohesion is the most important resource in crisis management

# Potential Victims

- Primary: Those directly affected
- Secondary: Witnesses, Managers
- Tertiary: Families
- Your plan must address the needs of all

# When the crisis hits

- Divide up the tasks: never do it all on your own
- Prioritize
- Remember to communicate quickly
- Avoid focusing on what's easiest

# Individual Responses to Trauma

- Acute Stress Reaction: 1st month
- -Flashbacks and nightmares
- - Dissociation: amnesia, unreality
- -Avoidance: thinking about the incident or returning to the scene of the traumatic event
- -Hypervigilance: anxiety, jumpiness

# PTSD

- Post traumatic stress disorder
- 1 month or after:
- More of the same, without dissociation
- Late onset: 6 months later

# Cognitive Responses

- Loss of previous world view and shattered assumptions about self and others:
- Safety
- Controlability
- Predictability
- Justice
- Goodness

# Group responses

- Splitting and conflict
  - Guilt or seeking out a guilty party
  - Solidarity and cohesion
  - Growth
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- You can influence group reactions before and after

# What to do

- Don't pathologize: symptoms are normal
- Don't try and make it all go away
- Avoid sending students to physicians: they will overmedicate
- Organize a debriefing

# Debriefing

- What it is: a group session, designed to air feelings and to promote group cohesion
- Restores faith in the institution
- What it isn't: therapy
- No one has a disorder; everyone is sad, overwhelmed...

# Format

- Facts: the story
- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Stress responses
- Information
- Where to go from here

# Good news

- Only 1 out of 4 people develop disorders after trauma
- The group is the best shock absorber known
- Support from the institution goes a long way.

# One Last thing

- Beware of burnout
- Save time to debrief the crisis team
- Keep records of previous crises: (the next one will happen and it will be different)
- Update the crisis plan regularly.