

A Look at Commemorating Disaster

Institute for Disaster Mental Health
Conference
April 8, 2011

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A Look at Commemorating Disaster

- Objectives
 - Brief review of the place and role played by anniversary and commemorative events in the context of the recovery continuum.
 - Anniversaries/commemorations in non-catastrophic non-mass casualty events.

Key Concepts

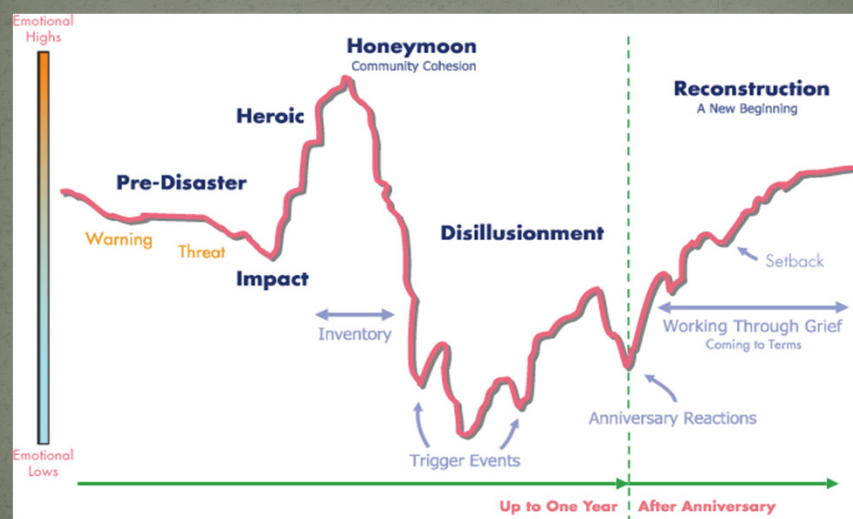
- Every disaster is different and each brings about it's own emotional reactions.
- Variables related to the scope, cause and intensity of the event will influence anniversary reactions.
- Anniversaries create a marking point that encourages individuals and communities to reflect.

Key Concepts...

- How a community chooses to approach an anniversary will reflect their individual needs.
- Anniversaries represent an opportunity to reflect on many various aspects of loss.



Phases of Disaster



Different of Disasters Diffferent Emotional Reactions

World Trade Center

- Caused by Terrorists
- Massive destruction
- Large loss of life
- Iconic nature of losses both in physical structures and among casualties.

NYS Flooding 2006

- Caused by Nature
- Modest level of property loss.
- Modest loss of life.
- Losses spread across large geographic area.



Shared Reactions-Individual

- Thoughts, feelings, dreams, and memories associated with the event
- Grief and sadness
- Fear and anxiety
- Frustration, anger, and guilt



Shared Reactions-Individual

- Deepened anxiety or depression, acting as limitations, as the new reality of life after disaster sets in
- Anger around the limits of governmental assistance and insurance (e.g., “the system,” “red tape”)
- Increased substance use
- Evolution of unaddressed trauma into diagnosable conditions such as posttraumatic stress disorder or depression
- Stress from multiple losses as resources run out

Shared Community Reactions

- Resurgence of media and political attention
- Community solidarity or discord
- Increase awareness of the need for preparedness
- Surge in community support services

Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program-CCP

- FEMA Funded Mental Health Support
 - A program of disaster mental health services funded through the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), and jointly overseen by FEMA and the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS).

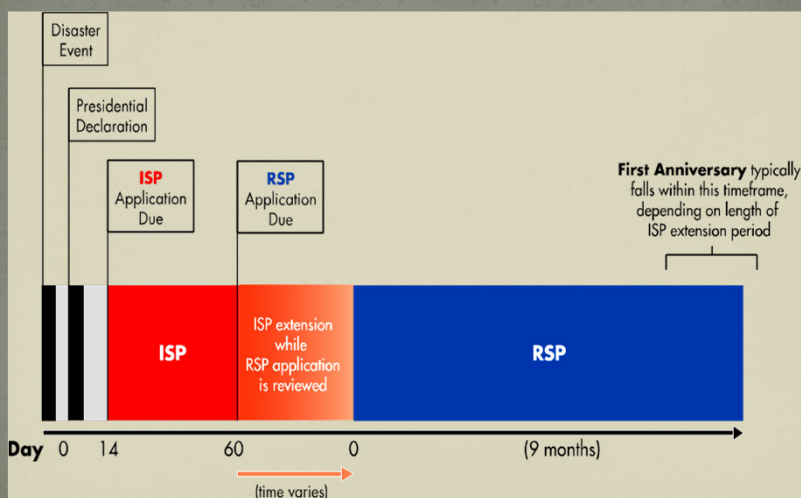


Componants/Process of CCP

- Response to a Presidentially declared disaster.
- Joint state and local mental health authority effort. The NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) is responsible for overall program implementation and oversight; local mental health authorities secure and coordinate local service provision.
- “The purpose of the crisis counseling program is to help disaster victims recognize that, in most cases, their emotional reactions are normal and to develop coping skills that will allow them to resume their pre-disaster level of functioning and equilibrium.”

- The CCP consists of services focused on preventing or mitigating adverse repercussions of a disaster.
- Program services are **community** based and often are performed in survivor's homes, shelters, temporary living sites, and churches.
- CCP services include supportive crisis counseling, education, development of coping skills, and linkage to appropriate resources, while assessing and referring those members of the community who are in need of more intensive mental health and substance abuse treatment to appropriate community resources.

CCP Timeline



CCP and Anniversary Events

- Anniversaries allow individuals and communities to reflect on resilience and healing.
- Anniversaries are a time to mourn losses associated with the disaster.
- Each community may perceive the anniversary differently.
- Each community will decide how it will observe the anniversary



New York State CCP's

- Project Liberty: Response to World Trade Center
 - 4 Years
 - \$140,000,000
- Project RECOVERY: Response to Flooding in 8 Counties in 2006
 - One year
 - \$ 3M



Project RECOVERY

- Provided services in six Counties
- Total number of Individuals Served = 17,425
- 81% of those responding to survey said Project RECOVERY helped either somewhat or a lot toward better functioning.



New York 2007

Project Recovery Broome County Team Leader:

“By representing the recovery process in this public manner, municipal leaders and residents were sensitized and educated, while flood victims were encouraged to become active in the processes which would ultimately enhance their personal recovery.”

“These efforts produced both primary and secondary effects all of which supported the recovery of flood victims.”

Florida

I can think of one meaningful community-generated anniversary event from the 2004 programs. Charley made landfall on Labor Day weekend in Southwest Florida, flattening a charming little place on the Gulf called Punta Gorda. As it happens, they held a very large (for them) event taking advantage of the coincidence of the anniversary and a holiday but mostly driven by the visible sign of recovery: the ribbon cutting for a restored city hall. Major community landmark. That event garnered a live spot of one of the national morning "news" shows and was heavily supported by the CCP staff there.

Florida 2005

The best time for a commemoration may or may not be the anniversary...

“In others, small steps to recovery were focused on by small subsections of a community whenever they happened. A school replanted trees in a West Palm Beach neighborhood park on Arbor Day. It may have been only 6 or 7 months post impact and recovery was still a ways away, but the event was a natural fit.”

Pennsylvania

The other factor has to do with repeated events such as areas that flood over and over again. I recall Jane saying...people were not going through the normal phases of disaster, skipping the honeymoon phase for example, because they knew from previous experience that help would be limited and they had not yet recovered from the previous disaster.

10 Presidential Declarations related to weather (storms/flooding/mudslides) from 200-2010

New Jersey 1999

For the anniversary of Hurricane Floyd in 1999 we had the kids participate in developing a video called "Watermarks". The kids were filmed writing about their experiences and then talking about how the flood affected each of them, through writing, drawing and even amateur acting.

Florida

Take Florida's 2004 experience. That year Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne all made landfall between within a 5 week period. The entire state was affected to one degree or another by at least one.

FEMA Individual Assistance declarations were issued all over the place over and over again. 23 counties were declared three times. Given those circumstance, it's no surprise that most communities felt an anniversary as a date irrelevant. If they had to pick a date that might have been significant, most communities were looking forward to the close of Hurricane Season 2005 on November 30. However, by the time that came, we had 2 new in state disasters to respond to and were hosting tens of thousands of Katrina evacuees in the state, so nobody was doing any "looking backwards" just then.

Florida

In 2007, we had a tornado strike a small rural section of Central Florida, with a totally different outcome.

There, several teenagers died-all students at the only high school around. Unsurprisingly, that was a community that needed to mark the actual anniversary, the anniversary efforts the project undertook there were very important to the community.

Final Word

“Every disaster is unique. The importance of an anniversary as a potential secondary stressor, hence the need to foster a special crisis counseling anniversary focus, is just as unique as the disaster. Not every disaster is going to live in history as 9/11. We need to remember those kinds are the exception, not the rule.”

James P. Micallef
Florida Mental Health Program Office

