

Supporting children and families in the aftermath of crisis



David J Schonfeld, MD, FAAP
Director, National Center For School Crisis And Bereavement
Children's Hospital Los Angeles

schonfel@usc.edu



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David J Schonfeld, MD, FAAP

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Psychological First Aid

- Provide broadly to those impacted
- Supportive services to promote normative coping and accelerate natural healing process
- All adults should understand likely reactions and how to help children cope



Anyone that interacts with children can be a potential source of assistance and support – if unprepared, they can be a source of further distress.

Common Adjustment Reactions to a Crisis

Fears & Anxiety;
School
Avoidance

Sleep problems;
Change in
Appetite

Difficulties with
Concentration &
Academic
Performance

Sadness &
Depression;
Anger &
Irritability

Alcohol & Other
Substance Use

Physical
Symptoms

Post-traumatic
symptoms/PTSD

Grief

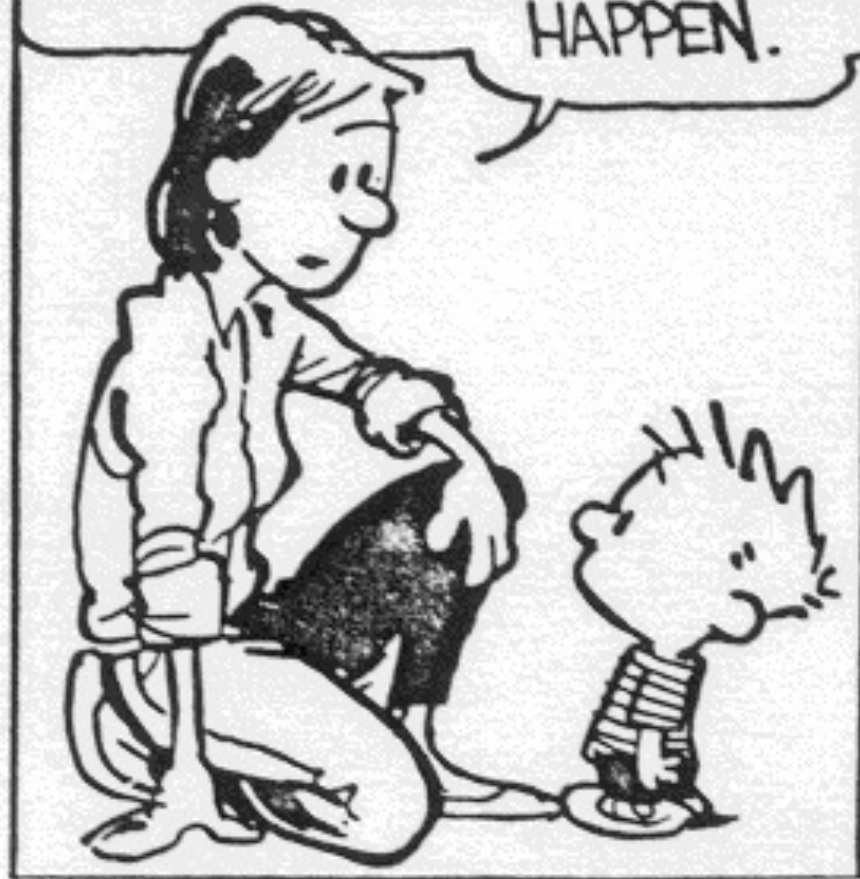
Guilt



I TRIED TO CATCH HIM,
BUT I COULDN'T, AND NOW
I'VE LOST MY BEST FRIEND!



WELL CALVIN, IF YOU WOULDN'T
DRAG THAT TIGER EVERYWHERE
THINGS LIKE THIS WOULDN'T
HAPPEN.



THERE'S NO PROBLEM SO
AWFUL THAT YOU CAN'T ADD
SOME GUILT TO IT AND
MAKE IT EVEN WORSE!

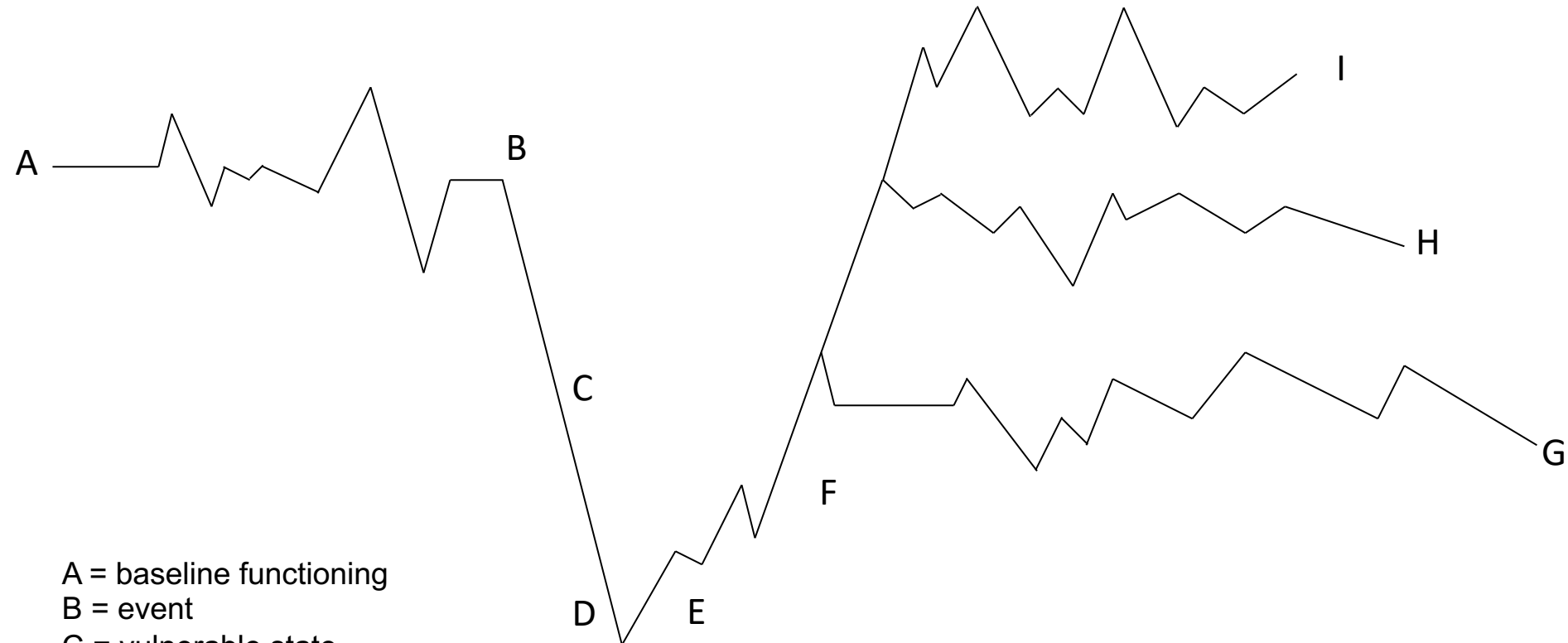


WATERS

If only the signs were this easy to read.



Adjustment Over Time in Crisis



A = baseline functioning

B = event

C = vulnerable state

D = usual coping mechanisms fail

E = helplessness, hopelessness

F = improved functioning

G = continued impairment

H = return to baseline

I = post-traumatic growth

Importance of professional self-care

- Recognize it is distressing to be with people who are in distress
- It's important professionals appreciate and address impact of supporting children who are grieving or traumatized on them personally and professionally
- Create a culture where:
 - it is ok to be upset
 - normalizes asking for help and models willingness to accept assistance

Compassion fatigue

- Exposure to trauma and suffering of others can lead to compassion fatigue
 - Empathy: understanding and taking perspective of another
 - Compassion: requires empathy but includes wanting to help and/or desiring to relieve suffering – “to bear or suffer together”
- Warnings about compassion fatigue imply that compassion is necessarily tiring
- Compassionate approaches can be gratifying and bring meaning to the work

Supporting those most in need can be gratifying

- Realistic objectives of purpose of interactions
- Have skills and resources to provide meaningful assistance – which can be especially difficult in austere environment and when you have personal challenges
- Are aware of and have sufficient support to deal with personal impact of work

Website resources

National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement

www.schoolcrisiscenter.org



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Coalition to Support Grieving Students

www.grievingstudents.org



COALITION *to* SUPPORT
GRIEVING STUDENTS

AAP Children and Disasters –

www.aap.org/en/patient-care/disasters-and-children

– Coping and adjustment:

www.aap.org/disasters/adjustment

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Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

- Exposure to death, serious injury, or sexual violence
- Re-experiencing traumatic event
 - Recurrent, intrusive, distressing memories
 - Recurrent, distressing dreams
 - Dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks); post-traumatic play
- Avoidance of stimuli associated with trauma
- Negative alterations in cognitions and mood
- Increased arousal
 - Difficulty concentrating or sleeping
 - Irritability or anger
 - Self-destructive behavior
 - Hypervigilance or exaggerated startle

Basic steps to support someone in crisis – Psychological First Aid

source: American Red Cross

Observation or
Awareness

Make a
Connection

Help People Feel
Comfortable and
at Ease

Be Kind, Calm, &
Compassionate

Assist with
Basic Needs

Listen

Give Realistic
Reassurance

Encourage
Good Coping

Help People
Connect

Give Accurate
and Timely
Information

Suggest a
Referral
Resource

End the
Conversation