

SKILLS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY

Trauma Recovery Innovations

Michele Bedard-Gilligan, Ph.D.

Emily R. Dworkin, Ph.D.

Kristen P. Lindgren, Ph.D.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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SPR Field Operations Guide, National Center for PTSD
and National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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Mollie Forrester, Rebecca Sladek, & Rosemary Whitright



TRAINING OUTLINE

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Background and Rationale

Components

Assessment

Core Skills

Wrap-Up and Application

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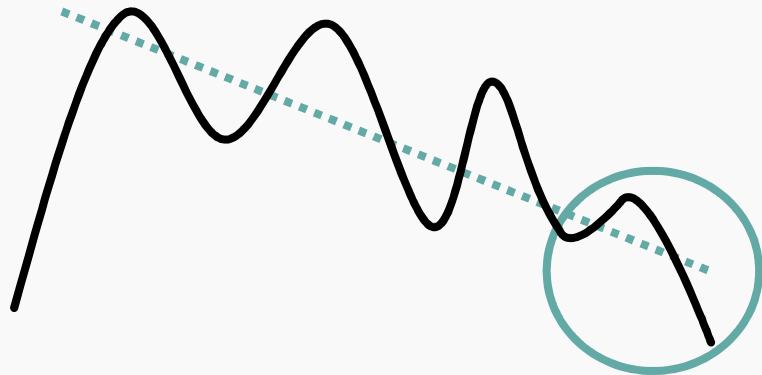


SPR BACKGROUND

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Our primary task in this crisis is to promote resilience.

Remember that **resilience** is the most common outcome of crises.



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SPR is an intervention to promote resilience.

SPR's **goals** reflect this focus, including...

Protecting
mental health

Enhancing
ability to
address one's
own needs

Teaching
skills to
promote
recovery

Preventing
maladaptive
behaviors

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SPR is not a treatment for mental health disorders.



It is **NOT**:

- ✓ Therapy
- ✓ Focused on pathology
- ✓ Psychodynamic or psychoanalytic exploration
- ✓ Debriefing

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SPR is an evidence-informed, flexible intervention.

SPR's **principles and techniques** are....

Based on research on trauma, risk, & resilience

Applicable to & practical in a variety of settings

Appropriate for people & families across the lifespan

Culturally aware

W

SPR is different from Psychological First Aid.

Psychological First Aid

Addresses safety concerns

Delivered during or right after the crisis

Typically one session

Focused on stabilization

Skills for Psychological Recovery

Presumes physical safety

Delivered in later phases of crisis

Typically multiple sessions

Focused on teaching specific skills

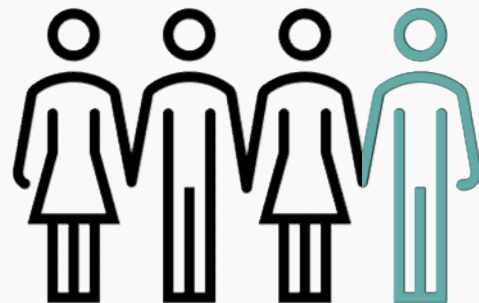
SPR is appropriate for many, but not all.

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✓ People in **chronic phase** of crisis

⊘ Not a **danger** to self/others

⊘ Not acutely **psychotic** or severely **cognitively disabled**



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SPR draws on good listening and clinical skills.



Active listening



Empathy and validation



Emphasizing and building strengths



Cultural awareness & humility

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SPR has some similarities to cognitive behavioral therapy.



Focuses on the present moment



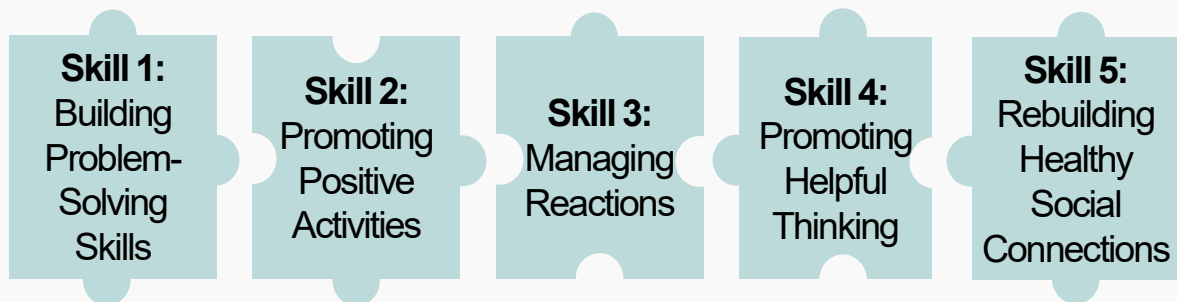
Emphasizes skill building



Assumes that thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are connected

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SPR includes 5 individually-tailored skill modules.



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The course of SPR is both flexible and structured.

First session: Introductions, assessment & planning, teach & practice a skill

Follow-up sessions: Review homework, re-assess, teach & practice a skill

Complete **1-5 sessions** as needed.

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Structure of first session

Introduce self and SPR

↳ Collaborative **assessment** and **skill selection**

↳ **Teach new skill:**

1. **Present** rationale for new skill
2. **Teach & practice** new skill
3. **Assign homework**

↳ **Summarize** & discuss **follow-up**

W

Structure of follow-up sessions

Review **homework** (practicing skill)

↳ Collaborative **assessment** and **skill selection**

Use same skill:

1. **Review** skill rationale
2. **Apply** skill to new domain
3. **Assign homework**

Teach new skill:

1. **Present** rationale for new skill
2. **Teach & practice** new skill
3. **Assign homework**

↳ **Summarize** & discuss **follow-up**

W

Structure of final session

Review **homework** (practicing skill)

↳ Review **rationale** for skills taught

↳ Review **accomplishments** and areas for **continued practice**

↳ Discuss what to do **if they need more help** in the future

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ASSESSMENT

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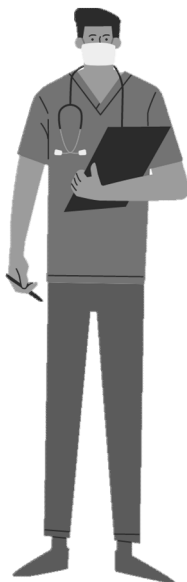
STEP 1: Identify needs and concerns.

Rationale: After a crisis there are **numerous demands and concerns**. Gathering information is needed to **target support**.

Does the person need a **referral** to a higher level or different type of care?



What are the person's **main needs**, concerns, and priorities?



WHEN TO MAKE A REFERRAL

Primary concern is **physical health**

Immediate **safety** need(s)

Acute **psychosis** or **cognitive impairment**

Acute mental health disorder

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STEP 2: Prioritize areas to address.



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STEP 3: Collaboratively make an action plan.

- ✓ Choose the most appropriate SPR skill(s)

Skill 1:
Building
Problem-
Solving
Skills

Skill 2:
Promoting
Positive
Activities

Skill 3:
Managing
Reactions

Skill 4:
Promoting
Helpful
Thinking

Skill 5:
Rebuilding
Healthy
Social
Connections

- ✓ Agree on a tentative **number of meetings**
- ✓ **Make referrals** if needed

SKILLS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY

SKILL SELECTION TOOL

Presenting Concern	Primary Skill	Secondary Skill
A difficult but solvable problem	Problem Solving	Social Connections, Helpful Thinking
Intense or repeatedly upsetting reactions	Managing Reactions	Social Connections, Helpful Thinking
Not knowing how to connect with friends or family	Social Connections	Healthy Activities, Helpful Thinking
Not having enough people that care about them	Social Connections	Healthy Activities, Helpful Thinking
Feeling depressed, sad, or withdrawn	Healthy Activities	Problem Solving, Social Connections
Upsetting thoughts that make them feel bad or stop them from having more positive thoughts	Helpful Thinking	Managing Reactions, Healthy Activities
A serious physical, mental health, or substance abuse problem	Problem Solving (with referral)	Social Connections, Helpful Thinking
Significant current hardships or adversities	Problem Solving (with referral)	Social Connections, Helpful Thinking

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CORE SKILL 1:

Building Problem-Solving Skills



WHEN TO USE

"I'm really **overwhelmed**."

"I feel so **helpless**."

"I'm **demoralized**."

"I feel like I don't have any
control over my situation."



CASE EXAMPLE

"I'm really **overwhelmed**."

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Rationale: Structured problem-solving helps when overwhelmed

“People can feel overwhelmed by their problems after a crisis.”

“Problem-solving is a helpful skill that you can learn!”

“I’d like to show you four steps that can help you solve problems.”

“This approach can get you better solutions and make you feel more in control and competent.”



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STEP 1: Define the problem/decide ownership.

Describe the problem **concretely** and **in detail**.

“I’m working 12-hour days and can’t get my notes done. I’m exhausted and overwhelmed.”

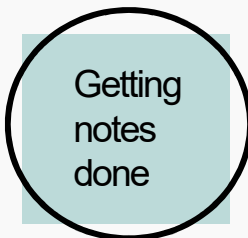
“I talked to my supervisor about cutting back, but we just don’t have the coverage.”



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STEP 1: Define the problem/decide ownership.

If the problem is **complex**, **break it down** into manageable chunks and **pick one**.



Working
12-hour
days

Lack of
attending
support

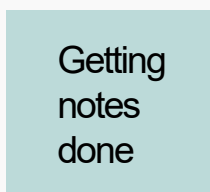
Feelings of
exhaustion



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STEP 1: Define the problem/decide ownership.

Is this...



A problem that
the person is
having?

A problem that
someone else
is having?

Person can
work to solve it

Someone else
needs to work
to solve it

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STEP 2: Set the goal.

Clarify
needs and
concerns

"I want _____"

"I need _____"

"I feel concerned that _____"

"I am afraid that _____"

W

STEP 2: Set the goal.



"I want to be able to finish most of my notes before leaving work"

"I need to have more time in the day where I can feasibly write notes"

"I feel concerned that I won't be able to get time between patients"

"I am afraid that my supervisor won't have my back"

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STEP 3: Brainstorm.

Write down **all possible options.**

Come in a little earlier
and stay a little later

Talk to supervisor
about what to do

Spend 5 minutes writing
notes between patients

Make more efficient
Epic templates



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STEP 4: Evaluate and choose the best solutions.

Come in a little earlier and stay a little later

PROS

Get more notes done
Doesn't rely on patient
load being light

CONS

Get less sleep
Get less time to
decompress



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CORE SKILL 2: Promoting Positive Activities



WHEN TO USE

"I've been feeling really **down**-
I just **don't feel excited** about
things anymore."

"My **routine** has gone out the window."

"I don't get to do **anything I**
like anymore."



CASE EXAMPLE

"I've been feeling really **down**-
I just **don't feel excited** about
things anymore."

Rationale: Positive activities improve mood & sense of control

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"A crisis can really mess up your routine and make you feel bad ."

"It can be hard to do things that make you feel
good and things that are important to you."

"I'd like to show you how to get
back to doing those things or find
new things to do."

"This approach can help
you feel better and more
in control."



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STEP 1: Identify and plan one or more activities.

Review a **list of activities.**



Create

Draw a picture
Paint a portrait
Take a photograph
Doodle / sketch
Organise photographs
Make a photograph album
Start a scrapbook
Finish a project
Do some sewing / knitting



Kindness

Help a friend / neighbor / stranger
Make a gift for someone
Try a random act of kindness
Do someone a favour
Teach somebody a skill
Do something nice for someone
Plan a surprise for someone
Make a list of your good points
Make a list of things or people you are grateful for



Plan

Set a goal
Create a budget
Make a 5 year plan
Make a 'to do' list
Make a 'bucket list'
Make a shopping list



Write

Write a letter with compliments
Write a letter to your politician
Write an angry letter
Write a grateful letter
Write a 'thank you' card
Write a journal / diary
Write your CV
Start writing a book



Self care

Take a bath
Take a shower
Wash your hair
Give yourself a facial
Trim your nails
Sunbathe (wear sunscreen!)
Take a nap



From: Living with Worry and Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty https://www.psychologytools.com/assets/covid-19/guide_to_living_with_worry_and_anxiety_amidst_global_uncertainty_en-us.pdf

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STEP 1: Identify and plan one or more activities.

Have the person **generate ideas**, considering pre-COVID activities

Take a
Zoom
exercise
class

Have a
backyard
picnic

Read a
new
novel

Plan a
vacation



From: Living with Worry and Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty https://www.psychologytools.com/assets/covid-19/guide_to_living_with_worry_and_anxiety_amidst_global_uncertainty_en-us.pdf

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STEP 2: Schedule activities in a calendar.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat

Help the person consider things that **increase the likelihood** that they will do each activity.

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CORE SKILL 3: Managing Reactions



WHEN TO USE

“I’m having **nightmares** about a patient.”

“Whenever I even think about going back to the ICU, I **panic**.”

“When I think about what happened, I can’t stop **crying**.”



CASE EXAMPLE

“I’m having **nightmares** about a patient.”

“Whenever I even think about going back to the ICU, I **panic**.”

“When I think about what happened, I can’t stop **crying**.”

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Rationale: Feeling your feelings helps with reminders

"Having strong reactions to reminders of the crisis is normal."

"Finding healthy ways to feel your feelings about the hard thing that happened can help the reactions get better."

"Over time, using these strategies can improve your self-confidence, functioning, and your coping strategies."



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STEP 1: Identify distressing reactions and their triggers.

Pick the **most distressing** reaction.

"I'm having **nightmares** about a patient."

"Whenever I even think about going back to the ICU, I **panic**."

"When I think about what happened, I can't stop **crying**."



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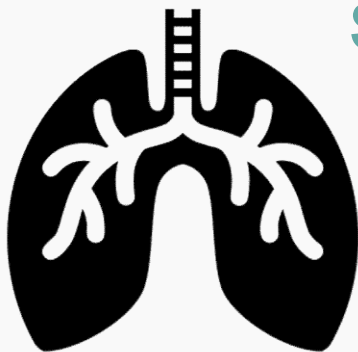
STEP 1: Identify distressing reactions and their triggers.

Discuss **triggers** for that reaction.



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STEP 2: Teach skills to address distressing reactions.



Skill 1: Breathing

Get **comfortable**

Breathe in through your nose for 5, expanding your belly

Hold for 5

Exhale slowly for 7 while you say a soothing word

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STEP 2: Teach skills to address distressing reactions.

Skill 2: Writing Exercise



Set aside **30 minutes**

Write about **whatever is distressing you**

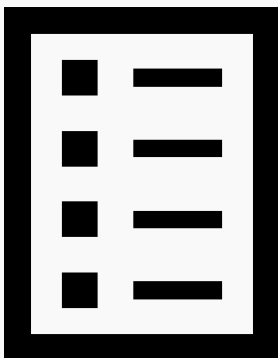
Give yourself space to **feel your emotions**

Consider the **things you did to help** yourself or others

Repeat, building in **new helpful thoughts**

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STEP 3: Create a plan to manage a distressing reaction.



Practice **good, culturally-aware self-care** to reduce your reactivity to triggers.

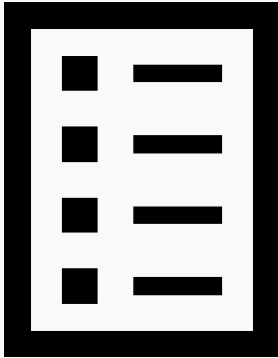
Meet basic needs (eating, sleeping, health)

Regularly do positive activities

Talk to social supporters about feelings

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STEP 3: Create a plan to manage a distressing reaction.



Have a **plan** to deal with triggers as they come up.

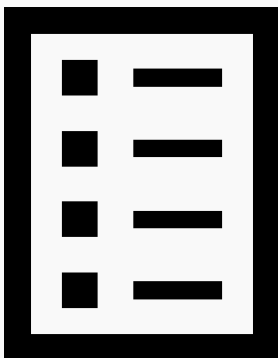
Differentiate between the current trigger & the past event

Can also use **helpful thinking** core skill

Write about how you feel

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STEP 3: Create a plan to manage a distressing reaction.



Give yourself **time to recover** after the trigger

Use the breathing skill or practice relaxation

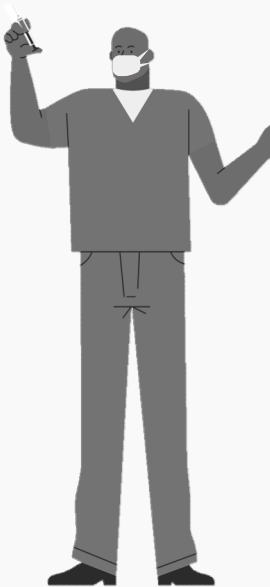
Do a positive activity

Talk to social supporters about how you feel

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CORE SKILL 4: Promoting Helpful Thinking



WHEN TO USE

"I'll never feel better."

"It was **my fault** that that patient died- I should have done more."

"Our **efforts were for nothing.**"



CASE EXAMPLE

“Our **efforts** were for nothing.”


Rationale: Changing thoughts changes mood and reactions W

“Having negative thoughts related to what happened is normal.”

“These negative thoughts can lead to negative emotions and bodily reactions.”

“I’d like to show you four steps to help you address unhelpful thoughts.”

“This can change your thinking and help your mood and bodily reactions.”



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STEP 1: Identify unhelpful thoughts.

Situation → Painful Emotions

Ask:

What thought goes along with the situation & emotions?

Situation → **Thoughts** → Painful Emotions

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STEP 1: Identify unhelpful thoughts.

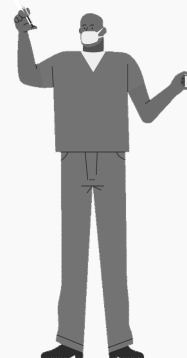
See a news story about COVID cases going up



“Our efforts were for nothing.”



Despair, sadness



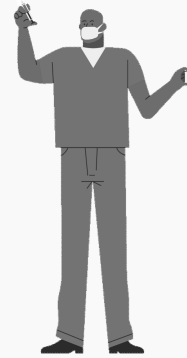
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STEP 2: Identify helpful thoughts.

Ask yourself: What would be **more helpful** thoughts? What would I **say to a friend** in this situation? What do **I have control** over?

Our efforts helped save some people's lives.

I can't control other people's behavior.



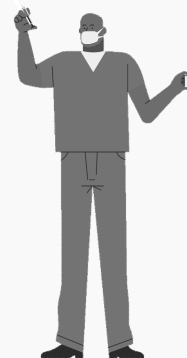
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STEP 2: Identify helpful thoughts.

Watch out for **Pollyanna thoughts**!

~~I'll be fine!~~

~~Cheer up- things aren't that bad.~~

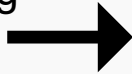


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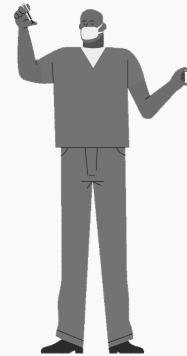
STEP 3: Rehearse helpful thoughts.

Imagine the trigger situation and say the helpful thought **out loud**.

Imagine hearing
about cases
going up



"I can't control other
people's behavior. My
efforts did help save some
people's lives."

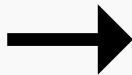


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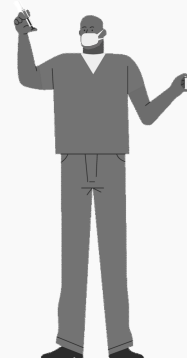
STEP 4: Assign practice of helpful thoughts.

Next time you're in a trigger situation, **practice the thought**.

Hear about
cases going up



"I can't control other
people's behavior. My
efforts did help save some
people's lives."



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CORE SKILL 5: Rebuilding Healthy Social Connections

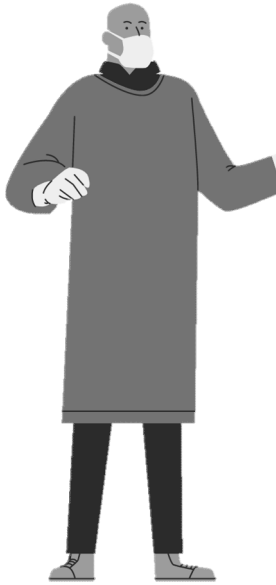


WHEN TO USE

“I miss my **family** so much.”

“I really wish I could **do more to help** others.”

“I don’t have **anyone to talk to** when I’m stressed.”



CASE EXAMPLE

"I don't have **anyone to talk to** when I'm stressed."

Rationale: Reflecting on support helps ensure needs are met W

"Social support can be a big source of strength after a crisis."

"It can be helpful to reflect on your resources and needs regarding social support."

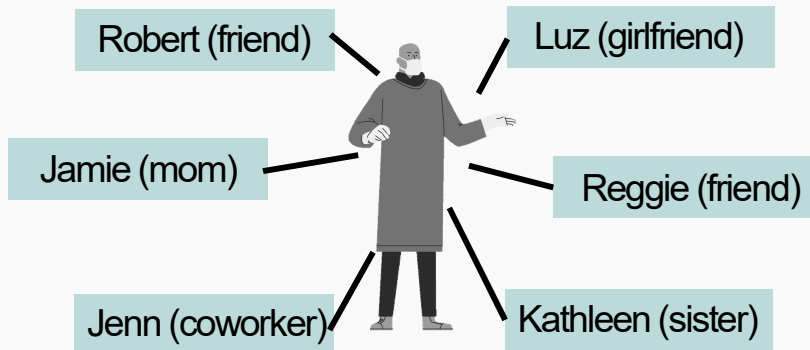
"I'd like to go through an exercise together to help you reflect on this."

"This can help make sure you're getting your emotional and practical needs met."



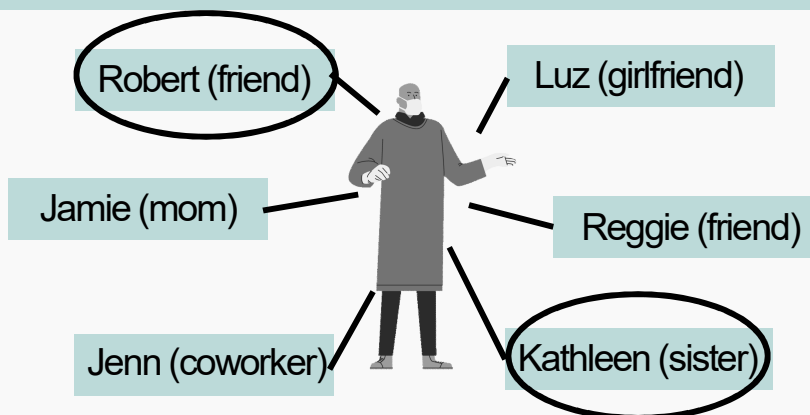
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STEP 1: Make a social connections map.



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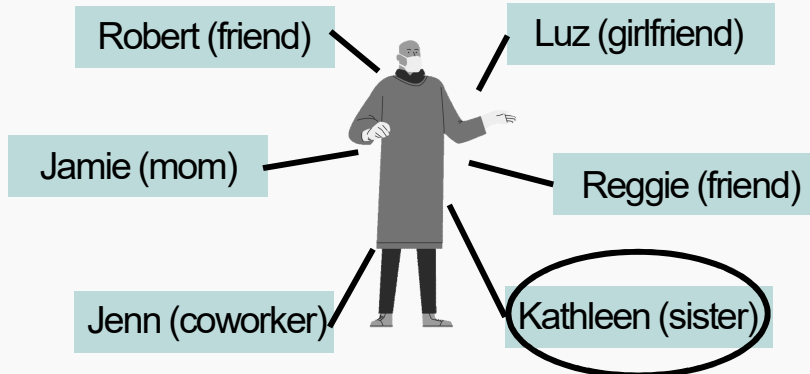
STEP 2: Review the social connections map.



Who are your **most important connections** right now?

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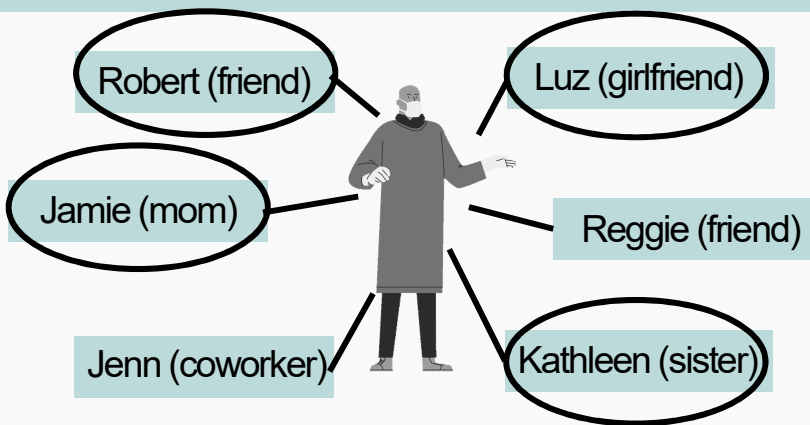
STEP 2: Review the social connections map.



With whom can you **share your feelings**?

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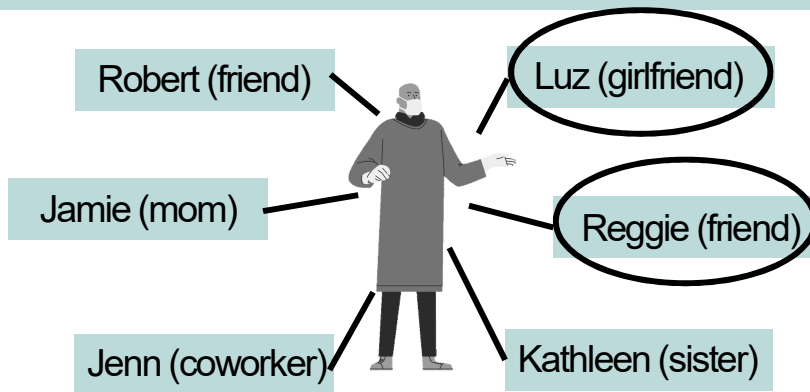
STEP 2: Review the social connections map.



With whom do you want to **be in touch** in the next couple weeks?

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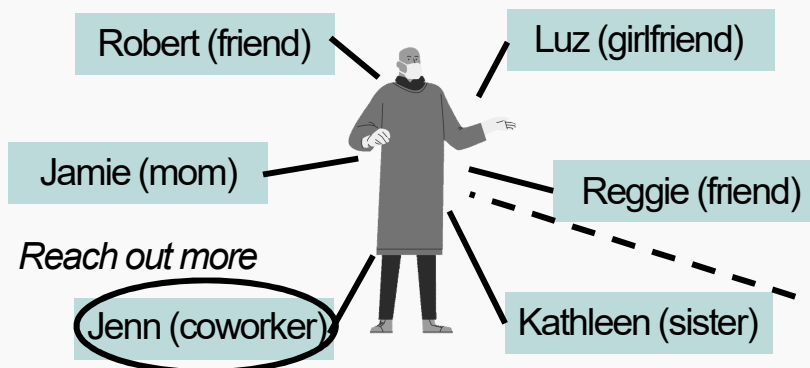
STEP 2: Review the social connections map.



Who might **need your help** or support right now?

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STEP 2: Review the social connections map.



Reach out more

Consider who and what is **missing** or **needs to be changed**.

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STEP 3: Make a social support plan.



Reach out to Reggie to support him.

Check in regularly with Kathleen, Robert, Jamie, and Luz.

Talk to Kathleen when upset.

Reach out to Jenn more.

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LAST THOUGHTS & RESOURCES

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Managing acute distress can promote long-term resilience.

We intervene to:

Build capacity to face crises with **tolerable levels of distress**.

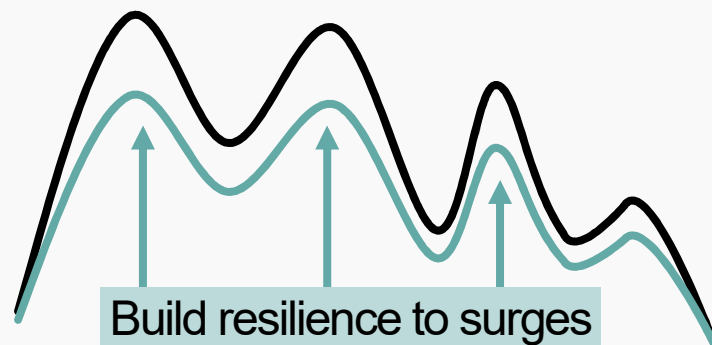


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Managing acute distress can promote long-term resilience.

We intervene to:

Build capacity to face crises with **tolerable levels of distress**.



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What it means to be resilient.

“It’s to be adapting and accommodating, rather than resistant to, the suffering. I think that’s what it is to live through hardship for sustained periods of time.”

- Dipali Mukhopadhyay, Columbia University
New York Times, April 21, 2020

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RESOURCES

Skills for Psychological Recovery Field Guide:

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/skills-for-psychological-recovery>

Skills for Psychological Recovery Online Training:

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/skills-psychological-recovery-spr-online>

UW Department of Psychiatry COVID Resources:

<https://psychiatry.uw.edu/clinical-care-consultation/covid-19-resources-for-mental-well-being/>

This American Life Episode about COVID in Detroit:

<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/709/the-reprieve>



SKILLS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY SKILL SELECTION TOOL

Skills for Psychological Recovery is a program that uses skill modules to build resilience and enhance coping following a disaster. It is usually offered in 1-4 sessions. The full manual and worksheets for each skill are available at tiny.cc/mvdpdz.

Presenting Concern	Primary Skill	Secondary Skill
A difficult but solvable problem	Problem Solving	Social Connections Helpful Thinking
Intense or repeatedly upsetting reactions	Managing Reactions	Social Connections Helpful Thinking
Not knowing how to connect with friends or family	Social Connections	Healthy Activities Helpful Thinking
Not having enough people that care about them	Social Connections	Healthy Activities Helpful Thinking
Feeling depressed, sad, or withdrawn	Healthy Activities	Problem Solving Social Connections
Upsetting thoughts that make them feel bad or stop them from having more positive thoughts	Helpful Thinking	Managing Reactions Healthy Activities
A serious physical, mental health, or substance abuse problem	Problem Solving (with referral)	Social Connections Helpful Thinking
Significant current hardships or adversities	Problem Solving (with referral)	Social Connections Helpful Thinking

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SKILLS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY SKILL SUMMARY

Skills for Psychological Recovery is a program that uses skill modules to build resilience and enhance coping following a disaster. It is usually offered in 1-4 sessions. The full manual and worksheets for each skill are available at tiny.cc/mvdpdz.



Conduct an assessment.

1. Identify needs and concerns
2. Prioritize areas to address
3. Collaboratively make an action plan



Build problem-solving skills.

1. Define the problem/decide ownership
2. Set the goal
3. Brainstorm
4. Evaluate and choose the best solutions



Promote healthy activities.

1. Identify and plan one or more activities
2. Schedule activities in a calendar



Manage reactions.

1. Identify distressing reactions & their triggers
2. Teach skills to address distressing reactions
3. Create a plan for distressing reactions



Promote helpful thinking.

1. Identify unhelpful thoughts
2. Identify helpful thoughts
3. Rehearse helpful thoughts
4. Assign practice of helpful thoughts



Rebuild social connections.

1. Develop a social connections map
2. Review the social connections map
3. Make a social support plan

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SKILLS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY CHEAT SHEET

Skills for Psychological Recovery is a program that uses collaborative assessment and five individually-tailored skill modules to build resilience and enhance coping following a disaster. It is usually offered in 1-4 sessions, depending on the needs of the client.

This cheat sheet was developed based on the resources developed by the National Center for PTSD and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. The full manual and worksheets for each skill are available at tiny.cc/mvdpdz.



USE FOR: All clients

Conduct an assessment.

1. Identify needs and concerns
 - ✓ Assess the person's main needs, concerns, and priorities
 - ✓ Determine whether a referral to a higher level or different type of care is needed
2. Prioritize areas to address
3. Collaboratively make an action plan
 - ✓ Choose the most appropriate SPR skill(s)
 - ✓ Agree on a tentative number of meetings (1-4)
 - ✓ Make referrals if needed

"What do you want to work on?"

"Which problem is bothering you most?"



USE FOR: Clients with a difficult problem that they need to solve; clients with serious adversities (with emphasis on referral)

Build problem-solving skills.

1. Define the problem & decide ownership
 - ✓ Describe the problem concretely and in detail
 - ✓ If the problem is complex, break it down into manageable chunks and pick one
 - ✓ Determine whether this is a problem that the survivor has ownership over
2. Set the goal
 - ✓ Assess and clarify needs and concerns
3. Brainstorm
 - ✓ Write down all possible options
4. Evaluate and choose the best solutions
 - ✓ List pros and cons of each solution
 - ✓ Choose a solution

"I want _____"
"I need _____"
"I feel concerned that _____"
"I am afraid that _____"



USE FOR: Clients experiencing disruption to their routines or hobbies; clients with reduced social contact; clients who are feeling down

Promote healthy activities.

1. Identify and plan one or more activities
 - ✓ Review a list of pleasant activities
 - ✓ Have the client generate ideas, considering pre-COVID activities
2. Schedule activities in a calendar
 - ✓ Help the client consider things that will increase the likelihood that they will do each activity.

Read a book	Go for a walk	Help someone	Set a goal
Organize your space	Make a gratitude list	Make a photo album	Try an online class
Listen to music	Call a relative	Pray or meditate	Listen to a podcast
Journal	Write a letter	Go for a walk	Make a bucket list
Make a collage	Draw or craft	Fix something	Talk to a friend

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USE FOR: Clients who are having intense or upsetting reactions to things that happen.

Manage reactions.

1. Identify distressing reactions & their triggers
 - ✓ Pick the most distressing reaction
 - ✓ Discuss triggers for that reaction
2. Teach skills to address distressing reactions
 - Skill 1: Breathing
 - Get comfortable
 - Breathe in for 5, expanding your belly
 - Hold for 5
 - Exhale for 7 while saying a soothing word
 - Skill 2: Writing exercise
 - Set aside 30 minutes
 - Write about which distressing you
 - Give yourself space to feel your emotions
 - Consider what you did to help yourself or others
3. Create a plan for distressing reactions
 - ✓ Discuss practicing good self-care to reduce reactivity to triggers
 - ✓ Make a standing plan to deal with triggers as they come up



USE FOR: Clients who are having upsetting thoughts that make them feel bad or stop them from having more positive thoughts

Promote helpful thinking.

1. Identify unhelpful thoughts
2. Identify helpful thoughts
 - ✓ Ask gentle, curious questions to develop other perspectives on the unhelpful thought
3. Rehearse helpful thoughts
 - ✓ Imagine the trigger situation and say the helpful thought aloud
4. Assign practice of helpful thoughts
 - ✓ Plan to mentally repeat the thought the next time the trigger situation arises

"What would be a more helpful way of looking at it?"

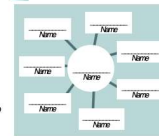
"What would I say to a friend in this situation?"



USE FOR: Clients who are unsure how to connect or reconnect with friends and family; clients who feel that they don't have enough people that care about them or can help them

Rebuild social connections.

1. Develop a social connections map
2. Review the social connections map
 - ✓ Questions to reflect on:
 - Who are your most important connections right now?
 - With whom can you share your feelings?
 - With whom do you want to be in touch in the next couple weeks?
 - Who might need your help or support right now?
 - Who or what is missing or needs to be changed?
3. Make a social support plan



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