

# PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID



In our lives, it is inevitable to face certain life challenges. Some of them can be nondisruptive to the flow of our lives, such as daily hassles, but some of them can be critical and impact our overall physical or mental health.

As educators, peers, or members of a community, we need to understand that different crises in life can affect individuals in varying magnitudes. To create support systems that can handle the after-effects of these life-altering crises.

Early support during a time of suffering is called psychological first aid. Psychological first aid is an approach for assisting people in the immediate aftermath of a disaster or other overwhelming crisis to reduce initial distress and foster short- and long-term adaptive functioning.

One doesn't have to be a medical or psychological practitioner to learn how to provide psychological first aid.

In times of distress, students often turn to their teachers, seniors, and friends. In these situations, you, as an educator or peer, might find yourself wanting to help the person but not sure how.

The following points can be used as a guide to help you offer psychological first aid to your students or peers in their time of need:

**Remember,** psychological first aid is not the same as psycho-emotional counseling or treatment. Providing psychological first aid becomes the bridge between the person seeking help and the medical, psychological, or social resources that can help them, and it cannot be a replacement for professional treatment or social support strategies.

**Prepare:** To offer help, one must know about the support available for the students and the psychological services and student groups on campus so that the information can be easily given to the students in their time of need.

**Be aware:** It is crucial to know about the common risks that students face and to be equipped with knowledge about prevalent psycho-emotional struggles during a crisis.

## The World Health Organization's Psychological First Aid Action Points

**Look:** certain signs of distress stand out in students and can be observed, such as issues with concentration, feeling disoriented in class, missing classes, and recurrently falling ill. Emotionally, being unable to manage sadness, anger, and anxiety or crying frequently and withdrawing from peers and student activities.

**Listen:** approaching the student is the first step in intervention; next, try to listen to them and assess their needs. Not everyone going through distress would require the same support. Listening actively and patiently while respecting the student's privacy will help you notice what they are looking for.

**Link:** understanding the needs of the student will help you link them to the support they seek. You can provide them with information or link them to health or mental health professionals.