

Psychological first aid

How to help someone to cope with shock following a traumatic event?

A traumatic event is a situation when a person feels a threat to their own life or health or the life or health of loved ones.

Psychological first aid is universal support, which is provided immediately after a traumatic event.

	WHAT DO I DO?	WHAT AM I SAYING?	WHY AM I DOING THIS?
I'M HERE	I calmly approach the person, introduce myself and say that I can help. I check if their physical condition is all right, and I stay close. I look if there are injuries; If they are, I call doctors. I suggest to get-to-know each other.	Hello! I'm Olena. I can help you. What's your name? What help do you need?	I do this to restore a person's feeling of not being alone and unity with other people.
ACT INDEPENDENTLY	I ask a person to do something simple and useful in this situation.	Please open the water bottle. Please go to the tent and get me some water from the cooler. Please leave your name and phone number here.	I restore a person's sense of control over the situation.
TELL ME	I just ask a person about something that requires thoughts and choices. If she does not react, I try to help her feel her own body. If there is silence again, I repeat it several times until I get an answer. If the person is sitting, I suggest that s/he stand up. I invite them to sit down or go for a walk to warm up.	How old are you? Whom you want to call? Now I'll take your hand and shake it. Squeeze my hand back. There is medical care here. Do you need it?	I help the person to act intelligently again, not emotionally. I return the connection between mind and body to her so that she can act again. 
BEFORE. NOW. AFTER.	I tell a person what happened and in what sequence. If necessary, I refer the person to medical, psychological, social or volunteer services and explain why it is important.	BEFORE Past: You were in the building 10 minutes ago when there was a massive explosion. People passing by called the police and an ambulance. NOW Present: You and another woman in consciousness. Two people are unconscious, but are receiving help from doctors. To the question: "Are they alive?" I honestly answer as it is. AFTER Near future: Now you will need to answer a few questions from the police. After that, we will decide together what to do next.	I help a person to understand that a traumatic event is already over, and show him the prospect of a near future.

You can find psychological support in our community here:

Trauma-Informed Approach in the Context of Access to Human Rights and Essential Services for Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees to Ukraine", which is jointly implemented in 2024-2025 by the Council of Europe projects "Facilitating Access to Human Rights and Essential Services for Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees at the community level" and "Youth for Democracy in Ukraine: Phase III" within the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine "Resilience and Recovery and Reconstruction" for 2023-2026. The texts were finalized in co-operation with the team of the twice displaced Donetsk Regional Youth Centre (Vinnytsia). The English version has been prepared by Olena Glazkova. Design by Iryna Vale.