
Psychological First Aid

Sample package of Psychological First Aid (PFA) Training Materials

Contact us at xsitementalhealth@pih.org for access to full materials



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What is Psychological First Aid?

- Psychological First Aid (PFA) is an initial disaster response intervention designed by the WHO to promote safety, stabilize survivors of disasters and connect individuals to help and resources. PFA is delivered to affected individuals by mental health professionals and other first responders.
 - The purpose of PFA is to assess the immediate concerns and needs of an individual in the aftermath of a disaster, and not to provide on-site therapy.
- PFA was adapted to the PIH context in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Its adaptation was informed by trainings delivered by PIH mental health team members across the globe, as well as to Massachusetts/US contact tracers involved in the US COVID-19 response. PFA trainings were conducted across sites for non-specialist providers across clinical teams, staff leadership, Ministries of Health, and other partners.
- Materials developed include participant and facilitator handbooks, pre/post-tests, supervision, and implementation tools.

INCLUDED
SAMPLE
RESOURCES:

Intervention and Training Overview

Module Example

Module Activity Example

Preview of Facilitator Guide

Preview of PFA Quick Reference Sheet



Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Response During COVID-19

Participant Handbook and Slides for Remote Learning

PFA Training Overview

	OVERVIEW OF TRAINING: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Response during COVID-19
Module 1	Welcome, Introductions and Pre-test (15 minutes) Review of WHO Definitions and Guidance around Coronavirus (15 minutes)
Module 2	Mental Health Consequences of living in the COVID Era (15 minutes)
Module 3	Providing Psychological First Aid (30 minutes)
Module 4	Supporting Special Populations (10 Minutes) COVID-19 Stigma and Discrimination (15 minutes) COVID-19 and Grief (5 minutes)
Module 5	Reinforcing Strengths and Positive Coping Techniques (30 minutes)
Module 6	Managing and Leading Teams during the COVID-19 Pandemic (15 minutes) Planning for Remote Support (15 minutes)
Closing	Post-Test and Evaluation (15 minutes)



Module 3: Providing Psychological First Aid

Psychological First Aid *Action Principles*

PFA involves helping people to:

- Feel safe, connected to others, calm and hopeful
- Have access to social, physical and emotional support
- Feel able to help themselves, as individuals and communities

To achieve these goals contact tracers should use the PFA Action Principles of **Look, Listen and Link** when offering support.



Look →



Listen →



Link

Module 3: Activity

Role Play: Applying PFA Action Principles

Scenario: A mental health service-user showed for his regular appointment. During this appointment, the patient disclosed that he believes he is experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19. The patient was then referred to the hospital for further testing. The patient's wife accompanied her husband to the hospital for his COVID-19 testing. The patient was screened and tested positive for COVID-19. The patient was admitted into the hospital. Shortly after the husband was admitted to the hospital, the wife began showing signs of emotional distress. The medical team saw that the wife was in distress and called for a mental health clinician to help the wife.



Preview of Facilitator Manual

Module 3: Providing Psychological First Aid (30 minutes)

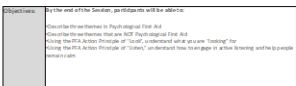

Learning Objectives

By the end of the Module, participants will be able to:

- Describe three themes in Psychological First Aid
- Describe three themes that are NOT Psychological First Aid
- Using the PFA Action Principle of “Look”, understand what you are “looking” for
- Using the PFA Action Principle of “Listen,” understand how to engage in active listening and help people remain calm
- Using the PFA Action Principle of “Link,” name one local resource you can link a client to receive additional, advanced care.





Facilitator Preparation Tips:

- Ensure that participants have access to the “Quick Reference Sheet for Providing PFA” in the appendix section (either printed/hard copies or emailed/electronic copies).

Slide Thumbnail	Facilitator Notes
<p>Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Response during COVID-19 Session 3: Providing Psychological First Aid (30 minutes)</p> 	<p><u>Slide: Module 3: Providing Psychological First Aid</u></p> <p><u>Ask:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before we begin Module 3, Providing Psychological First Aid, we want to ensure that everyone including our remote participants are able to hear and follow along with the slides and participant handbook?• (Pause and ensure everyone can hear and is able to follow along)
<p>What is Psychological First Aid</p> 	<p><u>Slide: What is Psychological First Aid?</u></p> <p><u>Explain:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As we discussed in the introduction module, one of the priorities in crisis and emergency settings is to protect and improve people's mental health and psychosocial well-being.• International, guiding organizations such as Inter Agency Standing Committee and Sphere note that PFA describes a humane, supportive

	<p>response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support.</p> <p><u>Ask:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does anyone have any experience providing PFA? Would you add anything else to these definitions? <p>(Take a few responses)</p>				
<p>Session 3: Providing Psychological First Aid</p> <p>Psychological First Aid Action Principles</p> <p>PFA describes a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>PFA THINGS What to say or do</th> <th>PFA IS NOT What NOT to say or do</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-intrusive practical care and support Assess needs and concerns Help people to address basic needs (e.g., food and shelter, information) Listen to people, but not pressuring them to talk Comfort and help people to feel safe Connect people to information, services, and social support Protect people from further harm </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is not something that only professionals can do It is not professional counseling It doesn't involve pressuring someone to tell their story or a psychological diagnosis It is not analyzing what happened It is not about convincing people to tell you their feelings and reactions to an event </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	PFA THINGS What to say or do	PFA IS NOT What NOT to say or do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-intrusive practical care and support Assess needs and concerns Help people to address basic needs (e.g., food and shelter, information) Listen to people, but not pressuring them to talk Comfort and help people to feel safe Connect people to information, services, and social support Protect people from further harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is not something that only professionals can do It is not professional counseling It doesn't involve pressuring someone to tell their story or a psychological diagnosis It is not analyzing what happened It is not about convincing people to tell you their feelings and reactions to an event 	<p><u>Slide: Psychological First Aid Action Principles</u></p> <p><u>Do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain that the basis of psychological first aid (PFA) is caring about a person in distress and showing empathy. PFA can assist people experiencing emotional distress manage their situation and make informed decisions. PFA helps normalize worry and other emotions PFA also promotes healthy coping and provides feelings of safety, calming, and hope. It involves paying attention to reactions, active listening and, if needed, practical assistance, such as problem solving, help to access additional options for assistance. PFA can be particularly important when supporting individuals who are in the midst of a crisis, feeling overwhelmed, and unable to cope with their situation or experience on their own. How people react to difficult experiences depends on the nature of the experience, their resilience, their age and personality, their support system and usual coping methods.
PFA THINGS What to say or do	PFA IS NOT What NOT to say or do				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-intrusive practical care and support Assess needs and concerns Help people to address basic needs (e.g., food and shelter, information) Listen to people, but not pressuring them to talk Comfort and help people to feel safe Connect people to information, services, and social support Protect people from further harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is not something that only professionals can do It is not professional counseling It doesn't involve pressuring someone to tell their story or a psychological diagnosis It is not analyzing what happened It is not about convincing people to tell you their feelings and reactions to an event 				
<p>Session 3: Providing Psychological First Aid</p> <p>Psychological First Aid Action Principles</p> <p>PFA involves helping people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel safe, connected to others, and hopeful Have access to social, physical and emotional support Feel able to help themselves, as individuals and communities <p>Look → Listen → Link</p>	<p><u>Slide: Psychological First Aid Action Principles</u></p> <p><u>Do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As we've discussed PFA involves helping people to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel safe, connected to others, calm and hopeful Have access to social, physical and emotional support Feel able to help themselves, as individuals and communities 				
<p>Session 3: Providing Psychological First Aid</p> <p>Psychological First Aid Action Principles: Look</p> <p>Look refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check for safety Check for obvious urgent basic social needs Ask about distress or a mental health condition requiring intervention 	<p><u>Slide: Psychological First Aid Principles: Look</u></p> <p><u>Do:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain that in PFA Principles Look actions refer to how to assess the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the current situation who needs support what the risks are the needs of the affected expected emotional reactions. 				

Quick Reference Sheet: Psychological First Aid

PFA Action Principle		Guidance on Providing PFA Action Principles	Key Psychological Phrases to convey connection, interest and empathy
Prepare		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure your personal physical and emotional safety before offering care and support to others • Learn about up-to-date safety and security concerns, Learn about availability of social services • Prepare simple relaxation strategies or information on practicing and reinforcing coping skills 	<p><i>*Questions the PFA Provider can assess to ensure personal safety:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where are the COVID-19 hot spots in my area?</i> • <i>Which areas should be avoided?</i> • <i>What are current safety guidelines in place that I need to adhere to face masks, social distancing, curfews, etc.?</i>
Look		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for ways to check for safety and check for urgent basic needs • Look for ways to calm and orient emotionally overwhelmed clients • Look for people with serious distress reactions • Attempt to make contact (call, SMS, video conference) with people who may need support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Are you able to safely get water and food for you and your family?”</i> • <i>“Do you have someone in your household who you can trust and talk with about this confidentially?”</i> • <i>“Do you have a safe living situation right now?”</i>
Listen		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about people’s immediate needs and concerns • Demonstrate active listening, interest and empathy • Create a sense of calm by emphasizing the present and the practical • Create a sense of safety by supporting a person and helping them feel calm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I understand your concerns and most do think a lot about the situation ...”</i> • <i>“It is very natural to be sad, angry, upset ...”</i> • <i>“I hear what you are saying, about having to ...”</i> • <i>“In this situation, your reaction is quite natural ...”</i>
Link		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help establish brief or on-going contacts with support persons or other sources of support, including family members, friends and community helping resources • Help people address basic needs and access services • Help provide information or tools about stress reactions and coping to reduce distress and promote adaptive functioning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Maybe we can discuss possible solutions ...”</i> • <i>“What we can offer is ... “</i> • <i>“I am concerned about you and would like to refer you to someone who can further help you....”</i>

Questions? We'd love to hear from you!

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Partners In Health, Mental Health Program

