

ESS

Emergency First Aid for Families

Your compassionate help will be remembered forever.
You do make a difference

When family members become emotionally upset while you are recording information, it can be very upsetting to the ESS volunteer. At times, you may feel there is a need for counseling support. We are finding that when counselors are being called in, many family members do not wish this level of support. Here are some suggestions on how to manage this situation prior to asking for a counselor.

1. Stop what you are doing (gathering information).
2. Warm, silent support may be all that is needed. Breathe and let go of your stress. Remind yourself that their emotional release is healthy.
3. Do not say: "Everything will be OK" as this is not how they are feeling at this point. Empathizes by saying something from your heart like: "I am so sorry for what you are going through..." or "This must be so difficult for you..." or something that validates their feelings.
4. Let them talk or gather their composure.
5. When they seem more settled, ask if it is OK to carry on.
6. If it seems appropriate, at the end of the session point out that folks are available to offer some support and advice on coping...would they like to get connected with someone. If "YES" then leave your table and approach one of the Salvation Army volunteers indicating you need a counselor. Explain the situation to the counselor then introduce the counselor to the individual or family.
7. If they remain emotionally distressed unable to continue, ask for counseling support.
8. Remember, staff support is available to you. If you have had too many emotionally challenging cases, take a time out and possibly do a "walk-and-talk" with one of the support staff. Make sure you take home the handout on stress and burnout designed for staff.