How to work with victims of acute traumatic events:

Multiprofessional crisis team at the FSHS (Helsinki-Espoo)

The aim of the crisis team
The aim of the crisis team is in case of sudden traumatic event to support the university community or group of students and help them to cope with the difficult experience. The purpose is to reach students exposed to the experience as soon as possible. The crisis team organize together with the institutions of the universities group meetings for the victims exposed to the traumatic experiences. In the meeting the facts, thoughts, feelings and also somatic reactions induced by the traumatic experience are discussed. The crisis team members both organize these group sessions and lead the discussion process in the sessions. The meaning is early intervention to traumatic experiences of students.

The team consists
of 1 psychiatrist, 2 psychologists, 1 general practitioner, 2 nurses and 1 care assistant, all working at the Finnish Student Health Service. This team work occurs in addition to everyone’s normal professional work at FSHS.

How the team works
The team has a hot-line number, which can be contacted by teachers or other officials at the universities or student organizations. Also the officials of the Finnish Student Health Service can contact the number in case of an acute traumatic event of a student group. The member of the crisis team then starts to organize the meeting of the student group together with the contact person of each case. The contact person can be the one who made the first call or some one of the student group exposed to the traumatic event. The aim is to have the first crisis session in 3 days after the traumatic experience. If needed, also follow-up sessions can be organized. In the sessions there are always two leaders from the crisis team.

Each month the crisis team has its own meeting for developing crisis work, sharing the experiences of the cases worked with, to transfer the phone to the next holder etc. The team also informs different groups in universities and student organizations of the work of the team and how to contact them.

Cases the team has worked with
In average one case in a month.

Typical cases are:
• suicide of a student or teacher
• sudden natural death of teacher or student
• death of a student in an accident
• student group in an accident, no deaths
• threat of violence
• natural disaster (earthquake and tsunami In Japan)

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