

Psychological First Aid



Supporting People in
the Aftermath of
Crisis Events



Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers

- WHO publication
http://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/en/
- Collaborative effort:
 - World Health Organization
 - War Trauma Foundation
 - World Vision International
- Endorsed by 24 UN/NGO international agencies
- Available in numerous languages

Psychological first aid: Guide for field workers



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What we will cover in the training

- What PFA is and is not
- Place of PFA in overall response
- Who, when and where of PFA
- Action principles: Prepare, Look, Listen and Link
- Good communication skills
- People who likely need special attention
- Adapting PFA to the local context
- Caring for yourself and your team members

Crisis events you have encountered

- Large events affecting many people
 - Natural disasters, plane crash, war/conflict
- Events affecting individuals
 - Car accident, robbery, home fire
- What physical, social and psychological reactions did people have?
- What was done to help and support people?

What comes to mind when you
hear...

“Psychological First Aid”

Starting with Care for Ourselves

Take a moment to reflect and write down:

- What I do to take care of myself?
- What does my team (family, colleagues) do to take care of each other?

Save your paper for later discussion!



Simulation



PFA Simulation: Discussion



- What was it like as a helper responding to this situation?
 - As a helper, what did you do well? Did you feel that you were making a difference?
 - What could you as helper(s) have done better?
-
- What was it like as a person affected by this disaster?
 - How did you feel supported or helped by the helpers?
 - Was there anything the helpers said or did that was NOT helpful, or could have done better?

What is PFA?

- Humane, supportive and practical assistance to fellow human beings who recently suffered exposure to serious stressors, and involves:
 - Non-intrusive, practical care and support
 - Assessing needs and concerns
 - Helping people to address basic needs (food, water)
 - Listening, but not pressuring people to talk
 - Comforting people and helping them to feel calm
 - Helping people connect to information, services and social supports
 - Protecting people from further harm

What PFA is NOT?

- It is NOT something only professionals can do
- It is NOT professional counselling
- It is NOT “psychological debriefing”
 - No detailed discussion of the distressing event
- It is NOT asking people to analyze what happened or put time and events in order
- Although PFA involves being available to listen to people’s stories, it is NOT pressuring people to tell you their feelings or reactions to an event

Intervention pyramid

Examples:

Clinical mental health care (whether by PHC staff or by mental health professionals)

Basic emotional and practical support to selected individuals or families, **such as Psychological First Aid**

Activating social networks
Supportive child-friendly spaces

Advocacy for good humanitarian practice: basic services that are safe, socially appropriate and that protect dignity

Clinical services

Focused psychosocial supports

Strengthening community and family supports

Social considerations in basic services and security

The place of PFA in overall mental health and psychosocial response

Responses to Crisis Events

- People may have very different reactions to an event
- What factors influence how someone responds?



Why PFA?

- People do better over the long-term if they...
 - Feel safe, connected to others, calm & hopeful
 - Have access to social, physical & emotional support
 - Regain a sense of control by being able to help themselves



Group Exercise (5 minutes)

Following a crisis event...

- WHO may benefit from PFA?
- WHO may need more advanced support?
- WHEN should PFA be provided?
- WHERE should PFA be provided?

PFA: Who?

- Very distressed people who were recently exposed to a serious stressful event
- Can be provided to adults and children
- Not everyone who experiences a crisis event will need or want PFA
 - Don't force help on those who don't want it, but make yourself available and easily accessible to those who may want support

Who needs more advanced support than PFA alone?

- People with serious life-threatening injuries
- People so upset they cannot care for themselves or their children
- People who may hurt themselves
- People who may hurt or endanger the lives of others



PFA: When?

- Upon first contact with very distressed people, usually immediately following an event, or sometimes a few days or weeks after

PFA: Where?

- Wherever it is safe enough for you to be there
- Ideally with some privacy (as appropriate) to protect confidentiality and dignity of the affected person

If this crisis happened...

- What would you need as a SURVIVOR?



- What would you need as a HELPER?

Full Day Orientation

Frequent Needs of People After Crisis Event

- Basic needs: shelter, food, water, sanitation
- Health services for injuries or help with chronic medical conditions
- Understandable and correct information about event, loved ones and available services
- Being able to contact loved ones
- Access to specific support related to one's culture or religion
- Being consulted and involved in important decisions

Prepare

- Learn about the crisis event.
- Learn about available services and supports.
- Learn about safety and security concerns.

- Crisis situations can be chaotic
- They often require urgent action



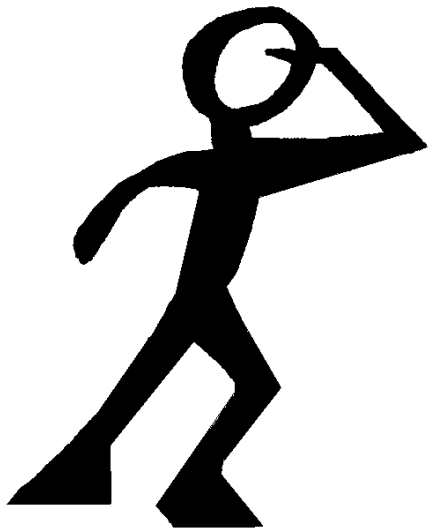
Wherever possible BEFORE you enter a crisis site, try to obtain accurate information so you can be safe and effective.

Prepare	Before you enter a crisis site, try to learn about...
The Crisis Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened? • Where? • When? • How many and who are affected?
Available Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is providing for basic needs (emergency medical care, food shelter)? • When and where can people access services? • Who is helping, including community members?
Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the crisis over or ongoing (aftershocks, fighting)? • What dangers may be in the environment? • Are there places to avoid due to insecurity or because it is not permitted to be there?

PFA Action Principles

Prepare

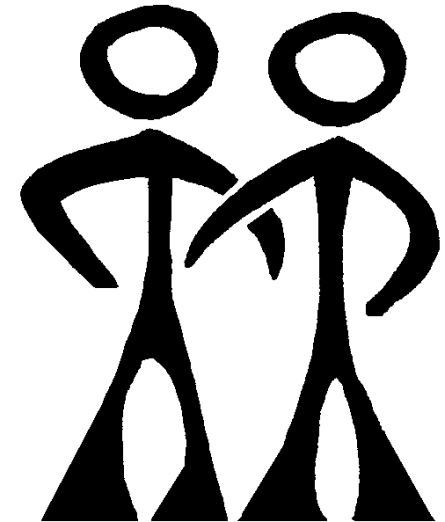
Look



Listen



Link



PFA Action Principles

Prepare

- Learn about the crisis event
- Learn about available services and supports
- Learn about safety and security concerns

Look



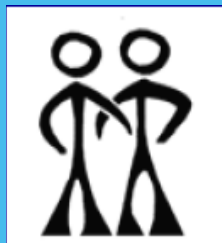
- Observe for safety
- Observe for people with obvious urgent basic needs
- Observe for people with serious distress reactions

Listen



- Make contact with people who may need support
- Ask about people's needs and concerns
- Listen to people and help them feel calm

Link



- Help people address basic needs and access services
- Help people cope with problems
- Give information
- Connect people with loved ones and social support

Case Scenarios

1. Natural disaster



2. Violence & displacement



3. Accident



Case Scenario Group Work

Thinking about 1) what you need most urgently and would find most helpful as a survivor, and 2) what you need as a helper to be able to assist...

- How will you PREPARE to help?
- What will you LOOK for in the crisis setting?
- What is important to consider as you approach affected people to LISTEN?
- How will you LINK people – what will they need and what resources can you draw upon?

Look



- observe for safety.
- observe for people with obvious urgent basic needs.
- observe for people with serious distress reactions.

- Crisis situations can change rapidly
- What you encounter may be different from what you learned before entering
- Take time – even a quick scan – to LOOK around before offering help

Be calm

Be safe

Think before you act

Look



- Observe for safety.
- Observe for people with obvious urgent basic needs.
- Observe for people with serious distress reactions.

Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What dangers can you observe? •Can you be there without harm to yourself or others? 	<p>If you're not certain about safety...DO NOT GO! Seek help from others.</p> <p>Communicate from a safe distance.</p>
People with obvious urgent basic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Is anyone critically injured •Does anyone need rescue? •Does anyone have obvious needs (e.g., torn clothing)? •Who may need help to access services or to be protected? •Who else is available to help? 	<p>Know your role. Try to obtain help for people who need special assistance.</p> <p>Refer critically injured people for care.</p>
People with serious distress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How many & where are they? •Is anyone extremely upset, immobile, not responding to others or in shock? 	<p>Consider who may benefit from PFA and how best to help.</p>

People who Likely Need Special Attention (to be safe... to access services)

- Children and adolescents
 - Especially those separated from caregivers
- People with health conditions and disabilities
 - People who are non-mobile, or who have chronic illness, hearing/visual impairments (deaf or blind), or severe mental disorders
 - Frail elderly people, pregnant or nursing women
- People at risk of discrimination or violence
 - Women, people of certain ethnic or religious groups, people with mental disabilities



Distress Reactions to Crisis

- Physical symptoms (shaking, headaches, fatigue, loss of appetite, aches & pains)
- Anxiety, fear
- Weeping, grief and sadness
- Guilt, shame (for having survived, or for not saving others)
- Elation for having survived
- Being on guard, jumpy
- Anger, irritability
- Immobile, withdrawn
- Disoriented – not knowing one's name, where one is from or what happened
- Not responding to others, not speaking at all
- Feeling confused, emotionally numb, feeling unreal or in a daze
- Unable to care for oneself or one's children (not eating or drinking, not able to make simple decisions)

Helping people in distress



- **Most people recover well over time, especially if their basic needs are met**
- **Those with severe or long-lasting distress may require more support**
 - Try to make sure they are not left alone.
 - Try to keep them safe until the reaction passes or you can find help from others.

Listen



- Make contact with people who may need support
- Ask about people's needs and concerns
- Listen to people and help them feel calm

Role Play





Listen

Make contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approach respectfully• Introduce yourself by name & organization• Ask if you can provide help, find safe/quiet place• Help person feel comfortable (water, blanket)• Try to keep them safe.
Ask about needs & concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Although some needs are obvious, always ask• Find out person's priorities – what is most important to them.
Listen & help people feel calm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay close to the person• Do not pressure them to talk• Listen in case they want to talk• If very distressed, help them feel calm & make sure they are not alone.



Help People Feel Calm



- Keep your tone of voice soft and calm
- Maintain some eye contact
- Reassure them they are safe and that you are there to help
- If someone feels “unreal,” help them to make contact with:
 - Themselves (feel feet on the floor, tap hands on lap)
 - Their surroundings (notice things around them)
 - Their breath (focus on breath & breathe slowly)

Listen



- Make contact with people who may need support.
- Ask about people's needs and concerns.
- Listen to people and help them feel calm.

Listen with compassion by using your:

Eyes – giving the person your undivided attention

Ears – hearing carefully their concerns

Heart – with caring and showing respect

Communication Exercise



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Good Communication Exercise



Good Communication: Things to Say and Do



- Try to find a quiet place to talk and minimize outside distractions.
- Stay near the person but keep an appropriate distance depending on their age, gender and culture.
- Let them know you hear them, for example, nod your head and say... *"hmmmm."*
- Be patient and calm.
- Provide factual information IF you have it. Be honest about what you know and what you don't know. *"I don't know but I will try to find out about that for you."*
- Give information in a way the person can understand – keep it simple.
- Acknowledge how they are feeling, and any losses or important events they share with you, such as loss of home or death of a loved one. *"I'm so sorry..."*
- Respect privacy. Keep the person's story confidential, especially when they disclose very private events.
- Acknowledge the person's strengths and how they have helped themselves.

Good Communication: Things NOT to Say and Do

- Don't pressure someone to tell their story.
- Don't interrupt or rush someone's story.
- Don't give your opinions of the person's situation, just listen.
- Don't touch the person if you're not sure it is appropriate to do so.
- Don't judge what they have or haven't done, or how they are feeling. Don't say... "You *shouldn't feel that way.*" or "*You should feel lucky you survived.*"
- Don't make up things you don't know.
- Don't use too technical terms.
- Don't tell them someone else's story.
- Don't talk about your own troubles.
- Don't give false promises or false reassurances.
- Don't feel you have to try to solve all the person's problems for them.
- Don't take away the person's strength and sense of being able to care for themselves.

Link



- Help people address basic needs and access services
- Help people cope with problems
- Give information
- Connect people with loved ones and social support



Help people to help themselves and
regain control of their situation.



Link – basic needs



- What needs do they request?
- What services are available?
- Don't overlook the needs of vulnerable or marginalized people
- Follow up if you promise to do so



Link – help people cope with problems



Distressed people may feel overwhelmed with worries...

- Help them prioritize urgent needs (what to do first)
- Help them identify supports in their life
- Give practical suggestions how they can meet their needs (e.g. registering for food aid)
- Help them remember how they coped in the past and what helps them to feel better.

Positive coping strategies (adjust for culture)

Help people use their natural coping mechanisms to regain a sense of control:

- Get enough rest
- Eat as regularly as possible and drink water
- Talk and spend time with family and friends
- Discuss problems with someone you trust
- Relax: walk, sing, pray, play with children
- Exercise
- Avoid alcohol or drugs, caffeine, nicotine
- Attend to personal hygiene
- Find safe ways to help others

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Role Play: Giving Information

Demonstrate how you will give information to the group of refugees. Some are fearful, anxious, uncertain and even angry; and all would like information on the situation and what help they can expect.





Link – give information



- Find accurate information before helping
- Keep updated
- Make sure people are informed where & how to access services – especially vulnerable people
- Say ONLY what you know – don't make up information
- Keep messages simple & accurate, repeat often
- Give same information to groups to decrease rumours
- Explain source & reliability of info you give
- Let them know when/where you will update them.



Link – social support

- Social support is very important to recovery
- Keep families together & children with caregivers
- Help people contact friends and loved ones
- Give access to religious support
- Affected people may be able to help each other – bring them together
- Make sure people know about how to access services (especially vulnerable people).



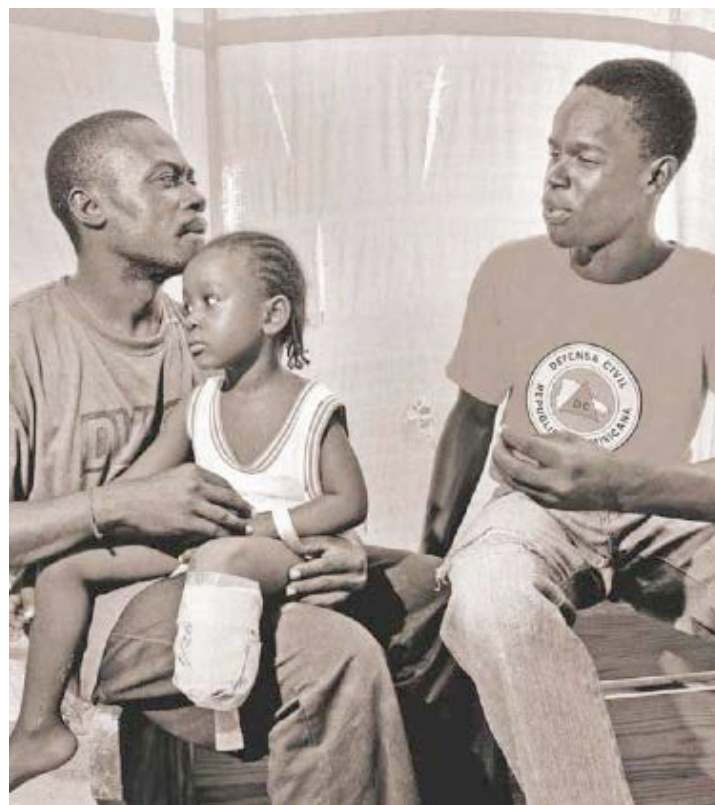
Ending your assistance

- Use your best judgment of person's needs and your own needs.
- Explain you are leaving and, if possible, introduce them to someone else who can help.
- If you linked them with services, be sure they have contact details and know what to expect.
- No matter what your experience, say goodbye in a good way, wish them well.



PFA Review

- What have you learned so far?
- What confuses you?
- Do you disagree with anything?
- Do you feel confident about being able to offer PFA?



Case Scenarios

1. Natural disaster



2. Violence & displacement



3. Accident



1. Role play learning points: Natural disaster (distressed woman)

- Introduce yourself by name and agency
- Ask the affected woman her name and if you can help her
- Protect her from harm by moving her to a safer place to talk away from the rubble
- Offer her some comfort (e.g. water) if you can.
- Listen and stay near her without forcing talk.
- Ask for her needs and concerns, and help her feel calm.
- Reflect ways in which she has acted appropriately (e.g. keeping herself safe) and encouraging good coping strategies.
- Acknowledge her worry over possible loss of her colleagues.
- Offer to help connect her with loved ones or other supports.

2. Role play learning points: Violence/displacement (unaccompanied child)

- Notice the unaccompanied child in the group of refugees as someone who likely needs special attention
- Speak with the child at their eye level
- Speak calmly and kindly to the child using words the child can understand
- Find out information about the child's family, such as the name of his sister
- Stay with the child while identifying a trustworthy family tracing organization that can organize a safe place for the child to stay until his family is found

3. Role play learning points: Accident (caregiver and child)

- Look for safety for self and others, check for serious injuries
- Call emergency medical help for the injured man
- Protect affected people from further harm (e.g. move wife & child away from traffic, prevent moving the injured man)
- Introduce yourself, speak respectfully and appropriate to the wife and child
- Help the wife to feel calm
- Help the wife prioritize problems and care for her child
- Link with information about the husband's care (e.g. hospital name) and/or assist family to accompany him to hospital
- Help the wife to link with loved ones for support.

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Exercise: Adapting PFA Action Principles to the Local Cultural Context

- Group 1: LOOK
 - In the local culture, how do people react, behave or respond when they are distressed? What might you be able to do to assist people with these symptoms of distress?
- Group 2: LISTEN
 - In the local culture, what do people do to show they are listening? How do you help people feel calm?
- Group 3: LINK
 - In the local culture, who are the people that individuals seek for emotional support? How do they approach others to get that support? How do they know they are supported?

Exercise: Vulnerable Groups in Crisis Situations

- Read the description of the person you are given
- Stand in a line
- When a statement is read, consider the position of the person in your description
- If you agree, with the statement, step forward
- If you do not agree, remain where you are.



Risks for Children and Adolescents



- In crisis, they lose familiar routines, environment, and people that make them feel safe
- Cannot meet basic needs or protect themselves
- Separated children are of special concern
- Risk of being trafficked, sexually exploited, recruited to armed forces
- Girl children at special risk for abuse, exploitation, stigmatization

Things you can do for Children and Adolescents...

- Keep together with loved ones
 - If unaccompanied, link them with a trustworthy child protection network/agency or try to find loved ones;
 - Don't leave them unattended.
- Keep safe
 - Protect them from gruesome scenes, injured people, destruction, upsetting stories, media.
- Listen, talk and play
 - Be calm, talk softly, relate on their eye level, and use language they can understand;
 - Listen to their views on the situation.
- Remember they also have strengths

People with chronic health conditions or disabilities

- Crises can worsen many health conditions (physical and mental disorders)
- Help them to...
 - Get to a safe place
 - Meet basic needs
 - Access medical care and medications
 - Link with a protection agency or other support
 - Access information on available services



People at risk of discrimination or violence

- They may be....
 - Left out when basic services provided
 - Left out of decisions about aid or where to go
 - Targeted for violence
- Help them to....
 - Find safe places to stay
 - Connect with loved ones & trusted people
 - Have info on available services or link them directly to services



Summary: Ethical Guidelines

Do's

- Be honest and trustworthy
- Respect a person's right to make their own decisions
- Be aware of and set aside your own biases and prejudices
- Make it clear to people that even if they refuse help now, they can still access help in the future
- Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential, as appropriate
- Behave appropriately according to the person's culture, age and gender

Don'ts

- Don't exploit your relationship as a helper
- Don't ask the person for any money or favour for helping them
- Don't make false promises or give false information
- Don't exaggerate your skills
- Don't force help on people, and don't be intrusive or pushy
- Don't pressure people to tell you their story
- Don't share the person's story with others
- Don't judge the person for their actions or feelings

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Final Simulation



Final PFA Simulation: Discussion



- What was it like as a helper responding to this situation?
 - As a helper, what did you do well? Did you feel that you were making a difference?
 - What could you as helper(s) have done better?
-
- What was it like as a person affected by this disaster?
 - How did you feel supported or helped by the helpers?
 - Was there anything the helpers said or did that was NOT helpful, or could have done better?

Did you do all of the following?

Prepare		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn about the crisis event.• Learn about available services and supports.• Learn about safety and security concerns.
Look		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observe for safety.• Observe for people with obvious urgent basic needs.• Observe for people with serious distress reactions.
Listen		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make contact with people who may need support.• Ask about people's needs and concerns.• Listen to people and help them feel calm.
Link		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help people address basic needs and access services.• Help people cope with problems.• Give information.• Connect people with loved ones and social support.

Starting and ending with care for ourselves

Remember what you wrote...

- How do I take care of myself?
- How does my team take care of each other?

Be responsible to yourself and others by paying attention to self-care on a daily basis.



Practise self and team care

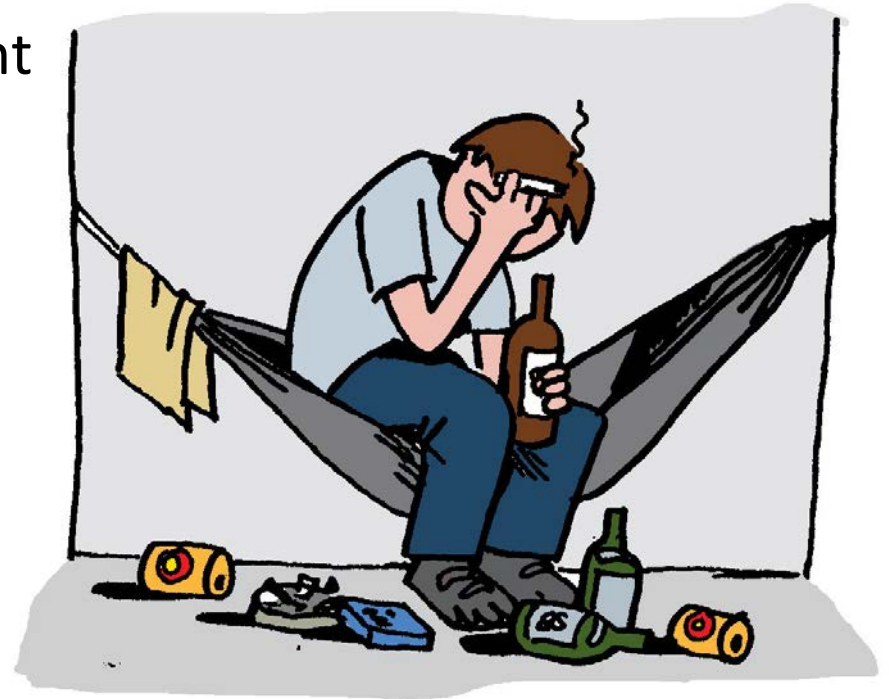


- Before:
 - Are you ready to help?
- During:
 - How can you stay physically and emotionally healthy?
 - How can you support colleagues and they support you?
- After:
 - How can you take time to rest, recover and reflect?

Seek support from someone you trust when you...

- Have upsetting thoughts or memories about the crisis event
- Feel very nervous or extremely sad
- Have trouble sleeping
- Drink a lot of alcohol or take drugs to cope with your experience

Consult a professional if these difficulties persist more than one month.



Self and team care

- It is best for helpers to be connected with an agency or group to ensure safety and good coordination
- Check in with fellow helpers to see how they are doing, and have them check in with you
- When your helping role in the crisis is over, be sure to take time for rest and reflection
- Talk about your experience with a supervisor, colleague or someone else you trust



Evaluation



- Please say...
 - What went well?
 - What could have been better?
 - What did you learn (one thing) that you will use in offering PFA?

THANK YOU & GOOD LUCK!