

Week #10

Verbal First Aid

In the aftermath of a crisis, every spoken word is significant. Spoken well, our words can bring comfort to a person who is hurting and can honor God in the process. We call this “Verbal First Aid.”

The following are traits of effective Verbal First Aid:

1. When silence occurs, just let it happen. Those in crisis have slowed reactions. Often, their ability to respond to questions is impaired.
2. It's all right to interrupt gently, if necessary, especially if the person is rambling. A gentle “I just wanted to be certain I'm hearing you correctly” is appropriate.
3. Listen with your eyes as much as with your ears. You may pick up more information or make note of contradictions with what is being verbalized.
4. If the person vents at you, don't take it personally. You may be the first safe person they have met in a while.
5. As you listen, prioritize the problems and help the person discover if the crisis is interfering in their lives.
6. Help the person generate options.
7. Have resources available. These may include books, support group information, and contact information for local and national agencies. See me for more information, if needed.
8. If you are planning to see this person again, discuss how they will be able to keep the appointment.
9. Work together to see what options work for this person.
10. Put the plan in writing for both of you.
11. Check to confirm that there is no potential for suicide/homicide.

By following these characteristics of Verbal First Aid, it is often possible to jump-start the recovery process.

Next Week: Evaluating Progress