

Compassion Fatigue & Disaster Response



Earthquake
Sichuan Province, China



Tornado
Picher, Oklahoma USA

**Colonel John S. Murray, PhD, RN, CPNP, CS, FAAN
J7 – Director of Education, Training & Research
Joint Task Force National Capital Region Medical**



**6th Annual Asia-Pacific World Conference
Focus: Disaster Preparedness & Response**

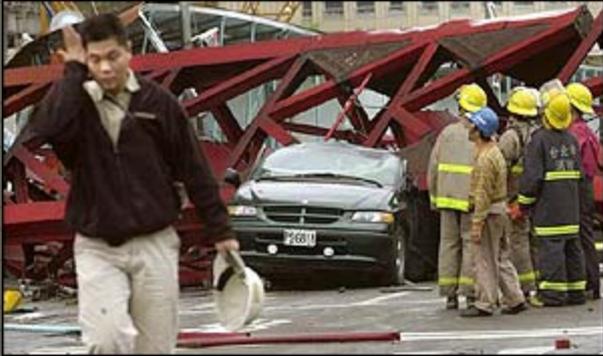
Understanding the effects of disaster on children: a developmental- ecological approach to scientific inquiry

Addressing the psychosocial needs of children following disasters

Compassion fatigue and disaster response

Taiwan Earthquake, March 31, 2002

6.8 Magnitude



Taiwan Earthquake, March 31, 2002

6.8 Magnitude



Taiwan Earthquake, March 31, 2002

6.8 Magnitude



Lessons Learned

- ◆ **Stay focused on the primary goal: assisting people in crisis**
- ◆ **Care for responders**
- ◆ **Disaster preparedness/training**
- ◆ **Model of global humanitarian partnership**
 - **No nation can go it alone when confronted by disaster**
 - **Recent example: Myanmar**

The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned

- ◆ We are not as prepared as we need to be
- ◆ Creating a culture of preparedness
- ◆ Design and build a unified system of response

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/02/20060223.html>

Compassion

◆ Defined

- An emotion that is a sense of shared suffering
- Most often combined with a desire to alleviate or reduce the suffering of another
- To show special kindness to those who suffer



Earthquake
Sichuan Province, China

Compassion

◆ Defined

- Compassion essentially arises through empathy, and is often characterized through actions, wherein a person acting with compassion will seek to aid those they feel compassionate for



Tornado
Picher, Oklahoma USA



Tornado
Windsor, Colorado USA

Compassion Fatigue

◆ Defined

- The emotional remains of exposure to working with the suffering, chiefly those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events
- Professionals must contend with not only with the normal stress or dissatisfaction of work, but also with the emotional and personal feelings for the suffering



Floods
Cedar Rapids, Iowa USA



Earthquake
Sichuan Province, China

Compassion Fatigue

- ◆ **Figley, 1995; 2003**
 - “the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.”
- ◆ **Is not burnout**
 - **Appears more rapidly**
 - **Helplessness**
 - **Isolation and confusion**
 - **Faster recovery rate**
 - **Symptoms are more mild to moderate**



Earthquake
Sichuan Province, China

Figley, C.R. (1995). *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized*. New York: Brunner Mazel

Figley, C. R. (2003). *Treating Compassion Fatigue*. New York: Brunner-Routledge

Key Information

- ◆ **Vulnerability**
- ◆ **Risk Factors**
- ◆ **Effects**
 - emotional
 - physical
 - behavioral
 - cognitive
 - spiritual
 - interpersonal
- ◆ **Institutional costs**
- ◆ **Protective factors**
- ◆ **Prevention**

Who is Vulnerable

◆ People who work with trauma victims

- Emergency care workers
- Counselors
- Mental health professionals
- Medical professionals
- Nursing professionals
- Clergy
- Human service workers
- Other professionals
 - Physical therapy, etc



Tornado
Picher, Oklahoma USA



Floods
Cedar Rapids, Iowa USA

Risk Factors

- ◆ Continuous exposure to patients and or family dynamics
- ◆ Individual personality traits
- ◆ Younger Vs older (inexperienced Vs experienced clinician)
- ◆ Over identification with the client
- ◆ Lack of support
- ◆ Ongoing career/social stressors
- ◆ “Code of silence”



Tornado
Hugo, Minnesota USA

Five tornados in less than 24 hours

Effects

◆ Emotional

- Sadness, grief, depression, anxiety, dread or horror, fear, anger, shame
- Intrusive Imagery (nightmares)
- Numbing
- Hypersensitivity
- Overwhelmed

◆ Somatic Complaints

- Fatigue
- Headaches



Earthquake
Sichuan Province, China

Effects

◆ Behavioral

- Sleep disturbances
- Appetite changes
- Accident prone
- Losing things
- Increase in negative coping like smoking, drinking, eating, workaholic, and substance abuse
- Self care deficits



Cyclone
Myanmar



Typhoon
Manila, Philippines



Cyclone
Myanmar

Effects

◆ Cognitive Shifts

- Changes in beliefs, expectations, and assumptions
 - Suspicion and vulnerability
 - Loss of control
 - Loss of self esteem
 - World view narrowed
 - Victim mentality



Tornado
Picher, Oklahoma USA

Effects

◆ Spiritual

- Questioning prior religious or spiritual beliefs
- Anger at God

◆ Interpersonal

- Withdrawn
- Mistrust
- Projection of anger and blame
- Relationship disturbances
 - Professional and personal



Earthquake
Sichuan Province, China

Institutional Costs

- ◆ Decrease in quality and quantity of job performance
- ◆ Low motivation
- ◆ Increase in mistakes
- ◆ Dissatisfaction or negative attitude
- ◆ Absenteeism/presenteeism
- ◆ Tardiness/call outs



Floods
Cedar Rapids, Iowa USA



Tornado
Suffolk County, Virginia USA

Protective Factors

- ◆ Inner strengths or resources
 - Self esteem
- ◆ Satisfaction with job, profession, personal relationships
- ◆ Experience
 - Cumulative effects of daily trauma *can* make one more resilient
- ◆ Social and Professional support systems
- ◆ Positive institutional responses



Earthquake
Sichuan Province, China



Prevention and Strategies

◆ Institutional

- Reasonable expectations of workload, sufficient resources, and staffing
- Supportive supervision
- Acknowledgement of the difficult work and consistent praise of hard work



Earthquake
Sichuan Province, China

Prevention and Strategies

◆ Institutional

- Ongoing staff education and understanding of the problem
- Creating a positive institutional environment and acceptance – eliminate “code of silence”



Earthquake
Sichuan Province, China

Self Care Strategies

- ◆ Personal support systems
- ◆ Diverse interests
- ◆ Personal boundaries/work boundaries
- ◆ Tending to spiritual needs
- ◆ Time management



Tornado
Hugo, Minnesota USA

Self Care Strategies

- ◆ Relaxation and time off
- ◆ Nutrition, sleep, exercise
- ◆ Evaluating personal control
- ◆ Getting help



Typhoon
Philippines

Basic Tenants

- ◆ We are all affected by the work that we do
- ◆ To some degree, these responses are normal
- ◆ Each professional can be an observer of others responses



Tornado
Picher, Oklahoma USA



Earthquake
Sichuan Province, China

References

- ◆ Murray, J.S. (2006). Understanding the effects of disaster on children: A developmental ecological approach to scientific inquiry. Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing, 11, 199 – 202.
- ◆ Murray, J.S. (2006). Addressing the psychosocial needs of children following disasters. Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing, 11, 133 – 137.
- ◆ Figley, C. R. (2003). *Treating Compassion Fatigue*. New York: Brunner-Routledge
- ◆ Figley, C.R. (1995). *Compassion Fatigue: Coping with Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder in Those Who Treat the Traumatized*. New York: Brunner Mazel

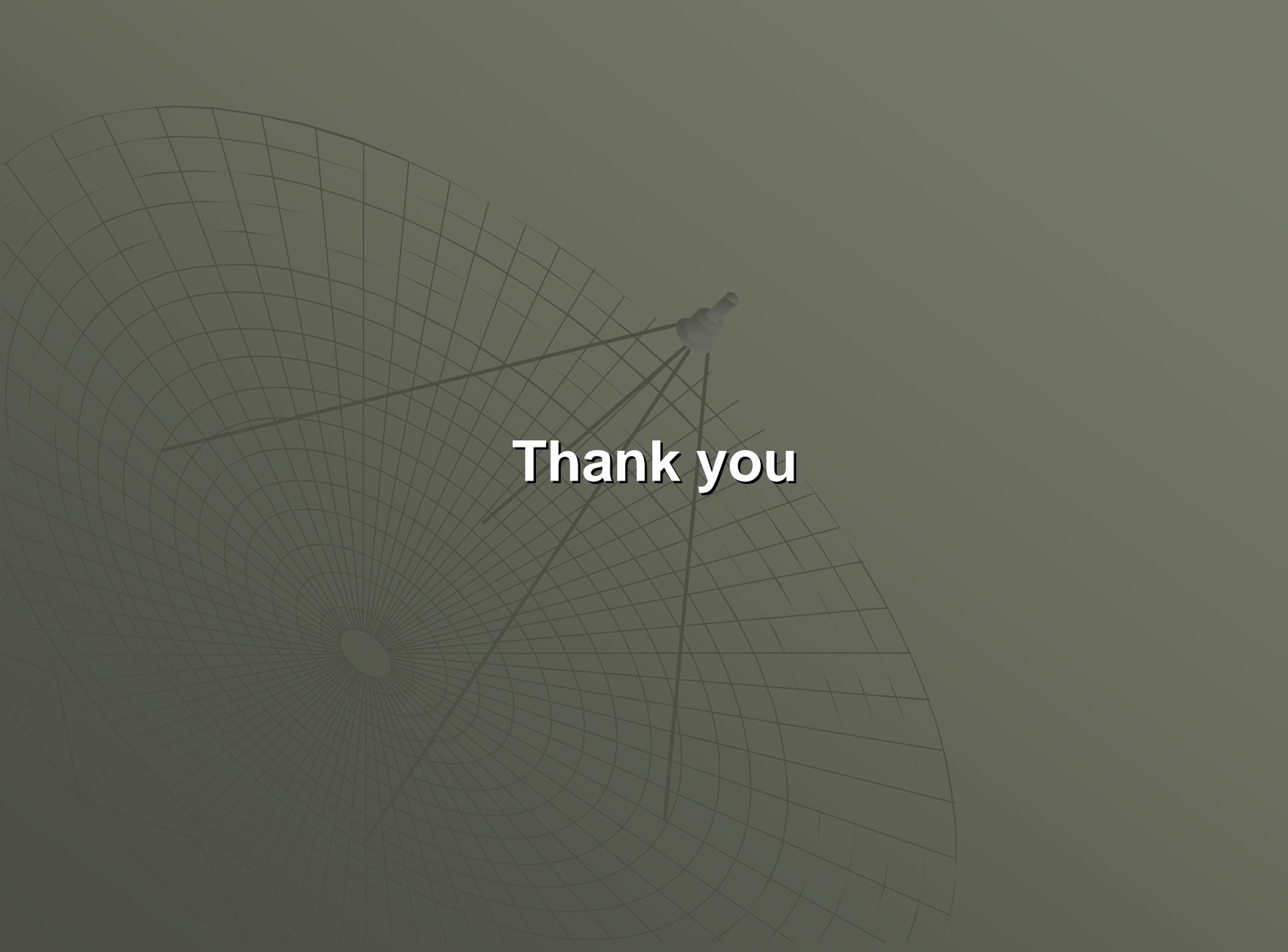


**Tornado
Racine, Montana USA**



**Tornado
Windsor, Colorado USA**

Questions?



Thank you