MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Bhaswati Patnaik
Department of Psychology
Utkal University

DISASTER-WHO(1992)

- 'A severe disruption, ecological and psychosocial, which greatly exceeds the coping capacity of the affected community'

- In terms of evoking mental health morbidity, *natural disasters* are mild in nature,

- *human errors* and *technological accidents* are moderate in nature

- and willful acts like *war and terrorism* are most severe in nature.

COMMON DISORDERS AFTER DISASTER

- Adjustment disorders
- Depression
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Anxiety disorders
- Non-specific somatic symptoms
- Substance abuse

PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

- **Psychological First Aid** (Reducing initial distress with compassion)
- **Debriefing** (GD within 48-72 hours to encourage participants to describe and share both factual and emotional aspects of their disaster experience)
- **Cognitive Behavioral Intervention** (CBT within 3 months for at risk of chronic PTSD)
- **Community-Based Interventions (**facilitating normalcy**)**

IMPORTANT POINTS

- Not to overlook people's *Resilience* in the face of disaster

- Recognise *Psychiatric morbidity* for referral

- *Culturally sensitive* service models

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPAREDNESS

- Acquisition of specific psychological knowledge and strategies, and through direct and vicarious experience with emergency situations and scenarios.

- Disaster mental health services are based on the principles of 'preventive medicine'

A I M: THREE ELEMENTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPAREDNESS

- **A**NTICIPATE that you will be feeling worried or anxious and remember these are normal, although not always helpful, responses to a possibly life-threatening situation

- **I**DENTIFY what the specific physical feelings associated with anxiety and other emotions are and whether you are having any frightening thoughts that are adding to the fear

- **M**ANAGE your responses using controlled breathing and self-talk so that you stay as calm as possible and can focus on the practical tasks that need attending to

Part II

The interplay between individuals and their surroundings

- ✓ natural environments
- ✓ social settings
- ✓ built environments
- ✓ learning environments
- ✓ and informational environments

ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER

- (Or ecological disaster) is a catastrophic event regarding the environment due to human activity

- The impact of humans' alteration of the ecosystem has led to widespread and/or long-lasting consequences

ECOCIDE

- The extensive damage to, destruction of or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been or will be severely diminished.

- The concept of ecocide as an international crime originated in the 1970s

ECOCIDE (CONTD.)

- Ecocide is used to refer to the destructive impact of humanity on its own natural environment.

- As a group of complex organisms we are committing ecocide through unsustainable exploitation of the planet's resources.

- The geological era we are living in, known as the anthropocene, is so named because the activities of the human species are influencing the Earth's natural state in a way never seen before.

CONSEQUENCES

The outward manifestations

- increasing incidence of deadly cyclones, droughts, wild fire

- landscapes of rubble and debris

- loss of sanctity of topography of our planet- land water and air causing loss of lives

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF ESTRANGEMENT FROM NATURE

- Societal collapse

Jared Diamond (2005) terms it to explain how Societies choose to fail or survive particularly as a result of environment changes.

Patrick Hossay argues that the human species is committing ecocide, via industrial civilization's effects on the global environment.

PSYCHICAL ECOCIDE

- To turn a blind eye to the natural world, as we have done, translates into psychical ecocide.
- Perception is degraded.
- Language truncated.
- Life becomes dispossessed of purpose and meaning.

CHILDHOOD

- Birds and animals constituted an integral part of the family as human community resided with them in a state of peaceful coexistence.

- Childhood was an extension of a boon of being born onto this earth to absorb the subtle beauties of nature unfolding through sunrise, rainbow and cacophony of birds at dusk.

ONE -WITH -NATURE

- A not-so-unrealistic hope, of a short respite from busy schedule by unwinding in a scenic place to be one with the nature, seems elusive today-

  Given the large scale damage done to the inherent tranquility of most of the tourist places in India.

  Their sanctity is continually violated with vulgarity and vagaries of collapse of civilizations.

LUXURY AND COMFORT SEEKING COMMERCIAL WORLD

- Promotion of Sedentary Lifestyle

- Lifestyle Diseases

- Informational Environment (Overload)

- Learning Environment (Media Violence & Sexual Content)

LOSS OF INNOCENCE

- Pollution is not the concern just for our mother nature rather it has been more pronounced in loss of innocence in human nature.

- A child's innocence is suppressed in a mechanized and digital environment to such an extent that the innate dispositions of simplicity as well as the ability to experience subtle emotions of unconditional love and faith is being derided in every moment of her existence

DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

- Nearly one in ten school children gets their first mobile phone by the time they are five, a study suggests.

- Similar is the degree of TV and internet use by young children intensive enough to make them suffer from 'withdrawal symptoms' when video games and other electronic devices are removed

CHANGING TIMES

- Lack of family time in reading and singing together, and in other emotional exchange with the child, is pushing more and more children into *isolation* and into the resultant mental health problems such as, *depression, fatigue and suicide.*

- The qualitative change in intellectual pursuits of children typically *lacking in of creativity and humour* is alarming, as cited by American Academy of Pediatrics.

AGGRESSIVENESS IN CHILDHOOD

- Earlier limited to the fun of teasing and pinching between friends, has now crossed the boundary of *gun firing and murder*.

WAY FORWARD

- We must collectively inculcate the spirit of 'oneness with innocence' to somewhat alleviate the damage already done.

- Sustainability approach in use of natural resources

- Changing materialistic outlook and awakening of inner self for empathy and compassion towards mother earth.

THANK YOU!