



Psychological First Aid and Mental Health First Aid

Psychological First Aid (PFA) has a different focus from Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). The two are complementary approaches that can be used in different settings.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID	MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID
PFA aims to reduce the impact of traumatic events (disaster/emergency) by exploring what stress looks like within ourselves and others.	MHFA offers initial support until appropriate professional help is received or until the mental health crisis is resolved.
PFA “reflects the emerging science and international consensus on <u>how to support people in the immediate aftermath of extremely stressful events</u> ” (WHO Guide for field workers)	MHFA educates people about how to identify, understand and help a person who may be developing a mental health issue.
PFA educates non-mental health professionals (including first responders and volunteers) on how to help minimize <u>psychological distress</u> in disaster or crisis impacted individuals/families.	MHFA aims to teach participants how to <u>recognize</u> symptoms of mental health problems.
PFA addresses, through practical care and support, reactions that are interfering with normal coping, in the immediate aftermath of the traumatic event.	MHFA is understanding the indicators of mental health conditions that require professional intervention. PFA is the first building block, followed by MHFA.
PFA is for everyone. It is a daily aid to facing the stresses of life, and helps participants gain an understanding of how to recognize when someone else is experiencing distress and how to offer help.	MHFA is for people wishing to learn more about actual mental health conditions and how to offer help.
Within disasters PFA is a proactive program for everyone to promote resiliency and reduce the impact of loss and trauma. However, it is not just for disasters, but gives knowledge and skills for people to live life through understanding stressors and traumas that impact them. Evidence demonstrates most people impacted by disasters and emergencies recover well with information, support, and referrals.	MHFA offers initial support until appropriate professional help is received or until the mental health crisis is resolved.