

HANDOUT 1: OVERVIEW OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY FOR POSTDISASTER DISTRESS

Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Postdisaster Distress (CBT-PD) is a time-limited program designed to help people who have been through a disaster. It is specifically designed to address the broad range of symptoms that are common after a disaster, including posttraumatic stress symptoms, depression, and anxiety. CBT-PD has been shown to be effective for survivors of both natural disasters and terrorism. It works for people who have mild, moderate, or severe symptoms.

The CBT-PD program is divided into three main sections: education, resiliency skills, and cognitive restructuring. In the **education** section you will learn about symptoms that are common after a disaster. Being aware of these symptoms is an important step toward being able to cope with them more effectively. In the **resiliency skills** section, you will learn a breathing technique to reduce arousal and will begin to increase your involvement in meaningful and rewarding activities to improve your mood and reduce avoidance. In the **cognitive restructuring** section, you will learn about the relationship between your thoughts and feelings, how to evaluate the thoughts that may be causing you distress, and how to replace them with more accurate, less distressing thoughts.

You will meet with your therapist for approximately eight to 12 one-hour sessions, preferably on a weekly basis. You and your therapist will develop home assignments for you to practice the skills taught in the program between sessions. Practicing these skills on your own for the home assignments is just as important to your recovery as participating in the weekly therapy sessions.

HANDOUTS

You will be given handouts after each session that provide important information or contain an overview of skills taught in the session. You can keep the handouts and refer back to them as needed. You can also share the handouts with a support person so that they may better understand the treatment and can help you as needed.

WORKSHEETS

There are also worksheets to complete as home assignments between the sessions. You will review the worksheets you have completed with your therapist at the start of each session. After you complete the treatment you can refer to the worksheets for help if similar situations arise in the future.