



Look,
Listen,
Link

Skill for
everyone

Basic course – psychosocial support

Psychological first aid



Finnish Red Cross

Objective: to know, understand, practise

- What is psychological first aid
- Why do we provide psychological first aid
- Who can provide psychological first aid
- Who needs psychological first aid
- The action principle: Look, listen, link
- Model of psychosocial support interventions
- Helper's self-care
- The "Do not harm" principle

Psychosocial support

Areas of psychosocial support

- Social work and services
- Support from the Church and other religious societies
- Psychological support
 - Psychological first aid
 - Debriefing
 - Peer support
 - Psychotherapy
 - Help on the internet
 - Helping lines
- Defusing for helpers

To whom?

For individuals, families, groups

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- The emergency preparedness activities
- Friend visitors
- First aid
- Healthpoints
- Kontti activities
- HIV and sexual health
- Multicultural activities
- Volunteer drug workers
- The support activities for family carers
- Youth shelters
- Preparedness group of psychologists
- Aid workers abroad

What events can be shocking or distressing?

- Diseases and injuries
- Loss of financial and material resources
- Accidents
- Medical procedures
- Loss of parent(s), child, friend, partner or some other important person
- To witness another person's suffering
- Sexual, physical or psychological abuse
- Violence
- Natural disasters
- Wars or armed conflicts
- Other, what?

It is natural to react

adapting

accepting

withdrawal

confused

guilt

aggression

overprotective behaviour

sense of
emptiness

everything feels
unreal

anger

irritation disbelief

difficulties
making
decisions

inability to get
out of bed

hopelessness

depression

shock

fear

start doing
normal everyday
activities

crying

shaking

nausea and
dizziness

headaches

stomach
problems

tiredness

nervousness

muscle
pain

sweating

problems with sleeping

The need for support varies from person to person

- Although a situation is potentially traumatic, it does not necessarily lead to trauma.
- The need for support in an emergency cannot be assessed on the basis of the incident itself or on the basis of which it affects. The decisive factor is what the event means for the individual. The need for support varies from person to person.



Who needs psychological first aid?

It is for distressed people who have been recently exposed to a serious crisis event.

- The feeling of security
- Integrity and dignity
- Predictability of life
- Trust in goodness and fairness in the world and your own beliefs

The purpose of psychosocial support is to restore the feeling of security.



The feeling
of security

Psychological first aid is...



Assessing needs and concerns

Helping to address immediate basic needs (food, water)

Protecting people from further harm

Psychological first aid

Providing practical support

Helping people access information, services and social support resources

Listening actively and giving emotional support

Helping people feel safe and calm

Psychological first aid is not...

- something only professionals do
- professional counselling or therapy
- encouraging a detailed discussion of the distressing event



Heli Bläfield

Psychological first aid is not...

- asking them to analyse what has happened
- pressing for details on what happened
- pressuring to share their feelings and reactions



Heli Bläfield

Do this:

- Respect privacy and ensure confidentiality
- Give emotional and practical support
- Behave appropriately by considering the person's culture, age and gender
- Listen actively
- Be aware of and set aside your own biases and prejudices
- Respect people's right to make their own decisions and facilitate self-help so they can solve their own problems
- Be honest and trustworthy



Do this:

- Help people access basic needs
- Recognise when something is too difficult for you to handle
- Make it clear to people that even if they don't want your help now, they can still access help in the future
- End your help in a respectful manner



Do not:

- break the rule of confidentiality, unless you have a very good reason to
- probe too deeply
- show disrespect or exploit your relationship as a helper
- be distracted and think of other things while someone tells you something important



Do not:

- judge the person for their actions and feelings
- tell another person what to do or how to solve their problem
- make false promises or give false information
- ask the person for money or favours for helping them



Do not:

- overestimate your own skills
- continue to press if the person does not want your support
- end the help in an abrupt way, without giving information, further support and closing the conversation
- use phrases like "I know how it feels"



Heli Blåfield

Identify your own limits

Look, listen, link

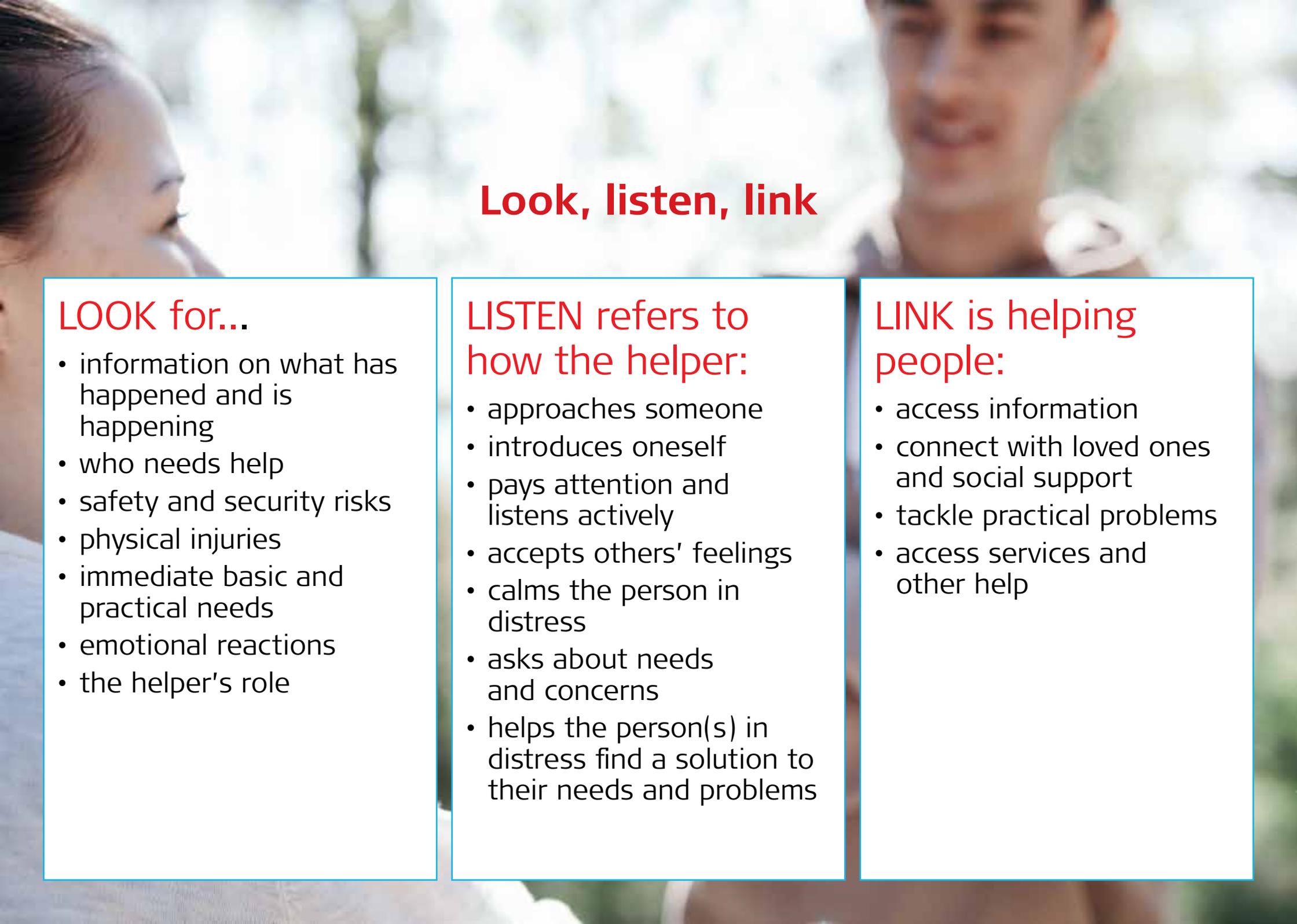


The purpose of psychological first aid is to

- ensure safety
- promote calm
- promote self- and collective efficacy
- promote connectedness
- promote hope

Hobfoll's
principles





Look, listen, link

LOOK for...

- information on what has happened and is happening
- who needs help
- safety and security risks
- physical injuries
- immediate basic and practical needs
- emotional reactions
- the helper's role

LISTEN refers to how the helper:

- approaches someone
- introduces oneself
- pays attention and listens actively
- accepts others' feelings
- calms the person in distress
- asks about needs and concerns
- helps the person(s) in distress find a solution to their needs and problems

LINK is helping people:

- access information
- connect with loved ones and social support
- tackle practical problems
- access services and other help

Psychological first aid and sensitivity

Dress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do I need to dress a certain way to be respectful?• Will impacted people be in need of certain clothing items to keep their dignity and customs?
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the customary way of greeting people in this culture?• What language do they speak?
Gender, age and power relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should affected women only be approached by women helpers?• Who may I approach (Who is the head of the family? The role of community leader?)?
Touching and behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the usual customs around touching people?• Is it all right to hold someone's hand or touch their shoulder?• Are there special things to consider in terms of behaviour around the elderly, children, women or others?
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the different ethnic and religious groups among the affected people?• What beliefs or practices are important to the people affected?• How might they understand or explain what has happened?

When to refer to professional help?

- People with serious, life-threatening injuries who need emergency medical care.
- People who are so upset that they cannot care for themselves or their children.
- People who may hurt themselves.
- People who may hurt others.



Know local services

When should you seek professional help?

If one or more:

- Prolonged anxiety, depression or nervousness
- Sleeping problems
- Isolation, human relations with others suffer
- Physical symptoms without obvious reasons
- You cannot work efficiently
- Difficulties in concentrating
- Misuse of alcohol or medicine
- Suicidal thoughts



**Dare to
seek help
if needed**

Mental health and psychosocial support services

Specialised services



Focused, non-specialised services



Community and family support



Basic services and security



Support for the helper's own coping strategies

- Recognise your own limits and limitations
- Be aware of your own needs and accept your own reactions.
- Responsible helpers take care of themselves
- Consider the risk – do not put yourself at risk
- Peer support between helpers
- Rest, relax

Take care of
your own
well-being

Good to remember when faced with emotions

- Focus on the emotions you get stuck in.
- What helps you to get away from them (e.g. exercise, outdoor or relaxing activities)?
- Listen and value your feelings
 - they protect you



The minimum level of psychological first aid and its basics

Psychological support includes calming and taking care of people. The most important skill is the ability to listen and be present.

Psychological first aid is helping people in distress so they can feel calm, safe and secure.

- Relates to both emotional and practical needs and concerns.
- The “Look, listen, link” principle
- Do not harm
- Sensitivity as a helper

Thank you!

The basic course of psychological first aid is based on
A Guide to Psychological First Aid For Red Cross and
Red Crescent Societies, IFRC Reference Centre
for Psychosocial Support, Copenhagen 2018.

Finnish Red Cross 

Psychosocial Centre

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies