

## **Mental Health Response and the Oil Spill**

**2011 Volunteer Symposium  
Responders and Disaster Affected  
Individuals: Bridging Gaps of  
Understanding and Misunderstanding  
June 16, 2011**

**Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health  
Video Communications and Distance Learning Division**

## **Faculty**

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**“Life is what happens when you’ve  
made other plans.”**

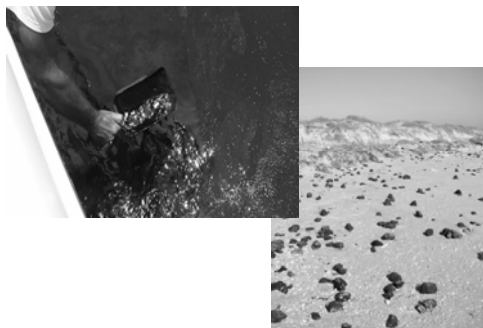
**– John Lennon**

## **The BP Catastrophe**

- **Largest accidental marine oil spill in the history of the petroleum industry**

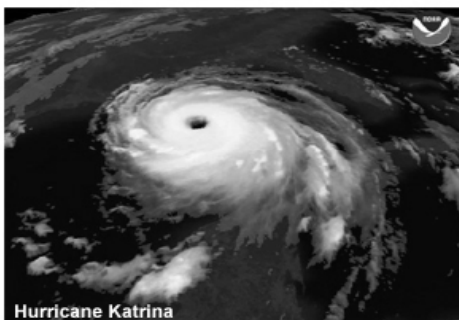


## **The BP Catastrophe**



**“This Was Going to Be My  
Year to Come Back”**

### Hurricanes



### Hurricanes



### Hurricanes



### Hurricanes



### Natural Disasters vs. Technological Disasters



### A Classification of Disasters

Toxicity	Technological (Human)	Natural (Nature)
Non-toxic	-Dam collapse -Airplane crash -Explosion	-Hurricane -Tornado -Flood -Earthquakes
Toxic	-Oil spill -Toxic chemical spill -Radiation leak -Toxic waste site	-Radon -Gas contamination -Nan-tech scenarios

From: Erikson, K. 1994. A New Species of Trouble: Exploration in Disasters, Trauma and Community. New York: W.W. Norton.

### **Impact**

- Oil spill's long term effects are unknown
  - Ecosystem impacts
  - Community impacts
  - Mental health impacts
- Recession impacting our economy

### **Impact**

- 5 years after Hurricane Katrina
  - Recovery
  - Rebuilding
  - Rebirth

In June, one day after an Orange Beach Charter Boat Captain shot himself, Baldwin County Mental Health Counselors were at marinas at 6 a.m. handing out business cards, providing individual and group sessions with those impacted by their fellow Captain's death.



### **Needs Identified**

- Immediate crisis counseling to address depression, anxiety, suicidality
- Individual, family, and couple counseling
- Training for anyone assisting with those impacted by the oil spill
  - Peer listening, individual/agency training

### **Needs Identified**

- Suicide prevention training
  - Communication of available resources
  - Financial assistance for local resource groups

### **From June to September 2010**

- Local mental health center provided 4 counselors
  - 1473 hours of adult individual therapy
  - 243 hours of child/adolescent therapy
  - 143 “oil spill” consumers (new)

**From June to September 2010**

- 1512 hours of non-billable assistance
- 34 hours of crisis intervention
  - Phone or face-to-face

**MSNBC Video**

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3032619/vp/38329624#38329624>

**BP Contributed \$12 Million to Alabama for Mental Health Services**

- DMH designated BCMHC as the lead agency for mental health efforts for Mobile and Baldwin counties
- Developed a comprehensive Advisory Board of local, state, and federal groups

**BP Contributed \$12 Million to Alabama for Mental Health Services**

- Appointed to the Governor's Coastal Recovery Commission
- Deployed 20 case managers/crisis counselors on the ground
- Call Center for Mobile/Baldwin counties



**Know Your  
Community Resiliency**

### **Baldwin County Coastal Resiliency**

- **Baldwin County Coastal Resiliency Coalition**
  - War Room
  - Business Support Center
  - CASPER Survey



### **Long Term Psychological Effects**

- Persistence beyond 2 years primarily associated with technological disasters
- Most social and psychological impacts, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, are delayed for as long as 10 years

### **Long Term Psychological Effects**

- Emergence of stress producing factors of violation of trust, litigation, health risks, and overwhelming uncertainty

### **Impacts of BP Spill**

- Significant anger
- Emotional withdrawal by fishermen
- Community conflict over VOO program
- Lack of trust
- Increase in seeking mental health services

### **Impacts of BP Spill**

- Increased domestic violence/substance use
- Suicide

### **Impact of Traumatic Events**

- Behavioral Health Issues affect everyone
  - Communities, volunteers, residents, responders
- These impacts include but are not limited to:
  - Physical, emotional, behavioral symptoms

### **Impact of Traumatic Events**

- Elevated levels of stress and anxiety
- Insomnia
- Withdrawal, irritability, isolation
- Disruption of family structure and unity
- Family violence

### **Impact of Traumatic Events**

- Alcoholism and drug abuse
- Psychological impairment
- Fatigue
- Increased suicide risk

### **Common Reaction to Stressful Events**

- Behavioral symptoms
  - Sleep problems
  - Avoidance of reminders
  - Excessive activity level
  - Crying easily
  - Increased conflicts with family

### **Common Reaction to Stressful Events**

- Hypervigilance
- Isolation, withdrawal

### **Common Reaction to Stressful Events**

- Physical symptoms
  - Fatigue, exhaustion
  - Gastrointestinal distress
  - Appetite change
  - Somatic complaints
  - Worsening of chronic conditions

**Common Reaction to Stressful Events**

- Emotional symptoms
  - Depression, sadness
  - Irritability, anger
  - Anxiety, fear
  - Despair, hopelessness
  - Guilt, self doubt
  - Mood swings

**Common Reaction to Stressful Events**

- Intervention options
  - Provide supportive listening and opportunity to talk in detail about disaster experiences
  - Assist with prioritizing and problem-solving

**Common Reaction to Stressful Events**

- Offer assistance for family members to facilitate communication and effective functioning
- Assess and refer when indicated
- Provide information on disaster stress and coping, children's reactions, and families

**Common Reaction to Stressful Events**

- Provide information on referral resources

**Common Symptoms**

- Anger
- Depression
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Suicide
- Ambiguous loss and unresolved grief
- Abuse

**Anger and Blame**

- Anger is one of the most common emotional reactions and part of the grief response
- Blaming is an effort to understand and control

### **Anger and Blame**

- **Who do you blame?**
  - Blame those who cause problem and/or how others responded to the disaster
  - Institutions and agencies
  - May be justified
- **Displaced anger where everyone blames each other**

### **Types of Ambiguous Loss**

- **Physical presence and psychological absence**
- **Physical absence and psychological presence**
- **Relentless stress of unknown future**
  - i.e., “What will I lose?”

### **Types of Ambiguous Loss**

- **Confusion as to “What has happened to me and why?”**
- **The loss of personal and family dreams**

### **Philosophy of Psychological First Aid**

- **That people are responding normally to an abnormal situation**
- **Perception is reality**
- **Promote safety, calmness, connectedness**

### **Philosophy of Psychological First Aid**

- **Progressive treatment model**
  - Going to the people instead of them coming to you
- **Reinforce education on stress management techniques**
- **Role model desired behavior**

### **Philosophy of Psychological First Aid**

- **Help individuals explore functional ways of coping**
  - Empower people to help themselves
  - You are the expert of yourself
- **Prompt follow-up and intervention – very important!**



**Project Rebound – May 2011****Face to Face Contacts**

	Individual Log	Outreach	Engagement	Brief Intervention	Group Participants	Total Face to Face Contacts
AHS	371	3,168	912	339	1,018	5,808
BCMHC	327	283	323	122	3592	4647
BPSOS	170	0	0	0	69	239
<b>Total</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>3,451</b>	<b>1,235</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>4,679</b>	<b>10,694</b>

**Project Rebound – May 2011****Groups**

	Group Counseling	Public Education	Total Groups
AHS	4	18	22
BCMHC	24	87	111
BPSOS	170	12	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>145</b>

**Project Rebound – May 2011****Individual Log Reactions**

	Behavioral	Emotional	Physical	Cognitive	Total Reactions
AHS	361	533	531	350	1,775
BCMHC	411	602	318	301	1,632
BPSOS	21	187	53	105	366
<b>Total</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>1,322</b>	<b>902</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>3,773</b>

**Project Rebound – May 2011****Materials and "Other" Contact Types**

	Total Materials	Email Contacts	Phone Contacts	Networking Contacts	Total "Other" Contact Types
AHS	12,427	342	1,742	849	2,934
BCMHC	17,246	263	577	254	1,094
BPSOS	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,673</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>2,319</b>	<b>1,103</b>	<b>4,028</b>

**Project Rebound – May 2011****800 Calls**

	Individual Log Calls	Total Missed Call Contact Attempts Made	Total 800 Call Contacts	800 Response Report	Total Callers Routed to CC	Total Webpage Hits	Total Face book Likes
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>Working on this</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Not reported</b>	<b>597</b>

**Project Rebound – May 2011****Grand Totals All Contact Types**

	Total Face to Face Contacts	Total "Other" Contact Types	Total 800 Call Contacts	Total All Contact Types
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,694</b>	<b>4,028</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>14,867</b>

