



Risk and Crisis Communication: Foundation, Scope, and Strategies

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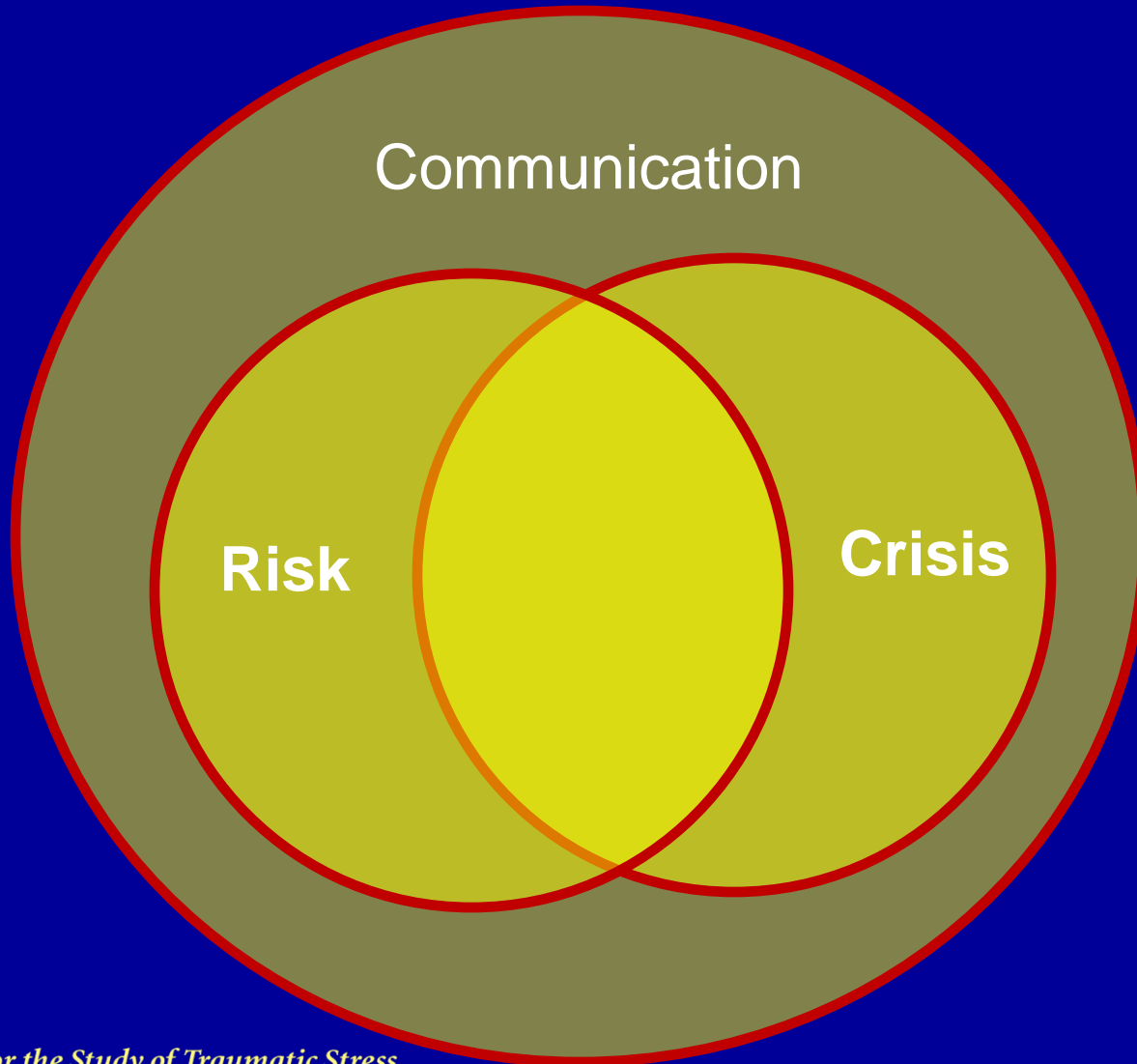
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Disclaimer

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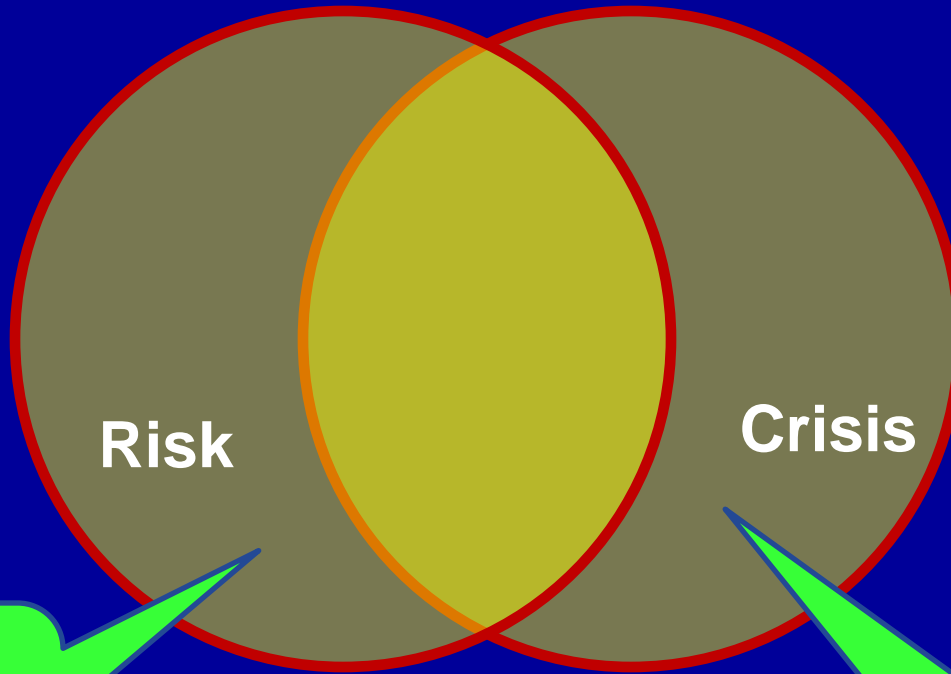
Risk and Crisis Communication...



Risk and Crisis Communication...

Communicate:

- Source of risk
- Nature of risk
- What to do
- What not to do
- Focus on victims/survivors



Communicate:

- Confidence
- Credibility
- Inspire action
- Lead collective response
- Focus also response/recovery providers

GOAL:
Influencing
Behavior

GOAL:
Influencing
Perception

Why Is Integrating Behavioral Science Expertise And Effective Risk/Crisis Communication Essential?

“Better than any medication we know,
information treats anxiety in a crisis.”

Source: Saathoff, 2002

**Communication is a
behavioral health intervention**

The behavioral choices people make to stay in place, evacuate, seek/not seek medical care, search for loved ones, etc. are very real life and death decisions.



Guide For Interventions

A major article:

Five Essential Elements of Immediate and Mid-Term Mass Trauma Intervention: Empirical Evidence

Psychiatry, 70(4)

Authors: Stevan Hobfoll plus 19 others

Very diverse/credible authors

The Five Elements:

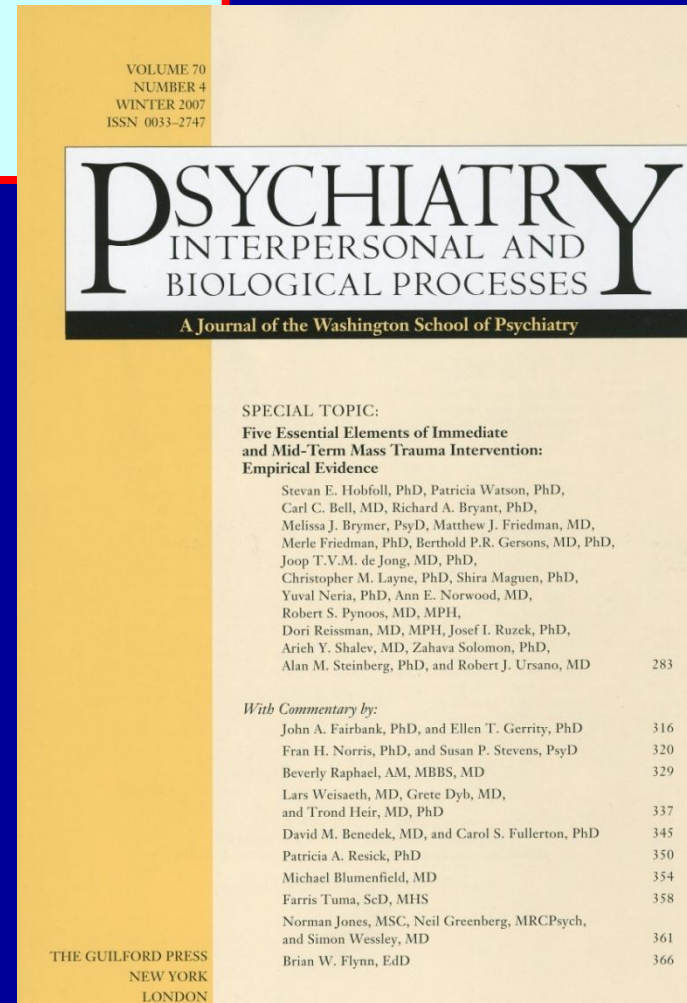
Provide a sense of safety

Calming

Sense of self- and community efficacy

Connectedness

Hope



Suggested Matrix For Considering Crisis Communications Strategies

	Preparedness	During Event/ Early Aftermath	Recovery Period
Provide sense of safety			
Calming			
Self & Community efficacy			
Connectedness			
Hope			

Information Is An Intervention

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN RESPONSE TO THREAT



Focus Risk Communication On:

What People Want To Know
In Addition To
What We Want Them To Know



The Basic Questions...

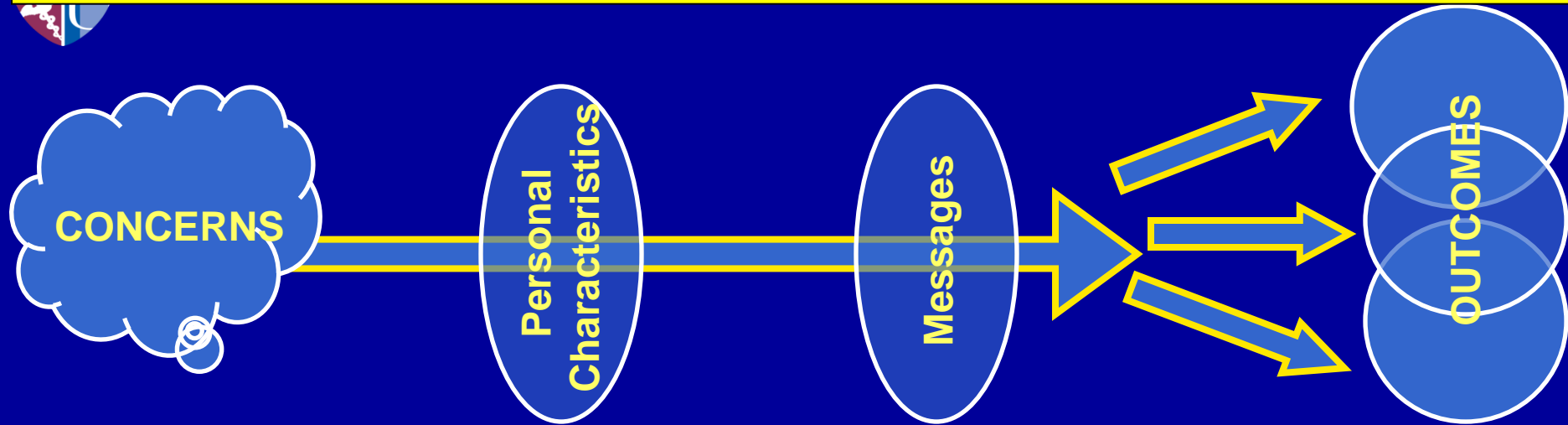
AM I OK?

WHAT ABOUT THOSE I LOVE?

WHAT SHOULD I DO?



IMPORTANT FACTORS/PROCESSES DURING THE IMMEDIATE IMPACT PERIOD



Concerns

- Am I OK?
- What about those I love?
- What should I do?

Personal Characteristics

- Perceived risk vulnerability
- Resilience
- Impairment
- Experience
- Med/Psych risk factors

Messages

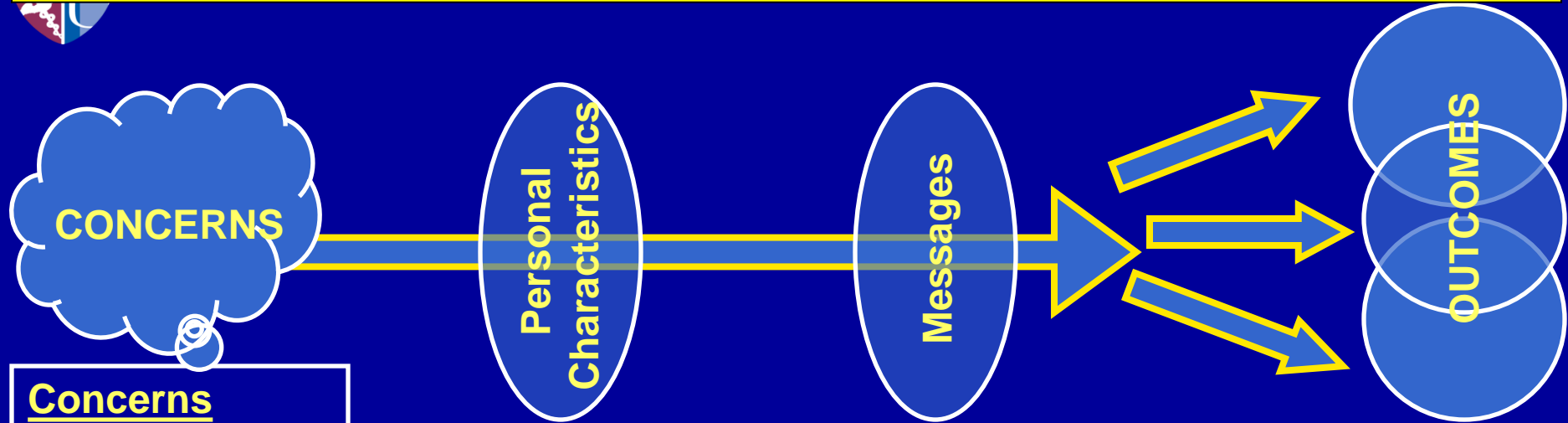
- Credibility of message
- Credibility of messenger
- Cultural appropriateness of message
- Delivery mechanisms
- Behavioral connectedness

Outcomes

- +/- Distress
- Pos/neg behavioral adaptation



IMPORTANT FACTORS/PROCESSES DURING THE **EARLY RESPONSE PERIOD**



Concerns

- Health risk
- Availability of health services
- Guilt
- Anger
- Fear of future
- Grief
- Crisis of faith

• **What should I do?**

Personal Characteristics

- Hlth. status
- Resilience
- Impairment
- Experience
- Soc. support
- Med/Psy risk factors
- Spiritual/faith context

Messages

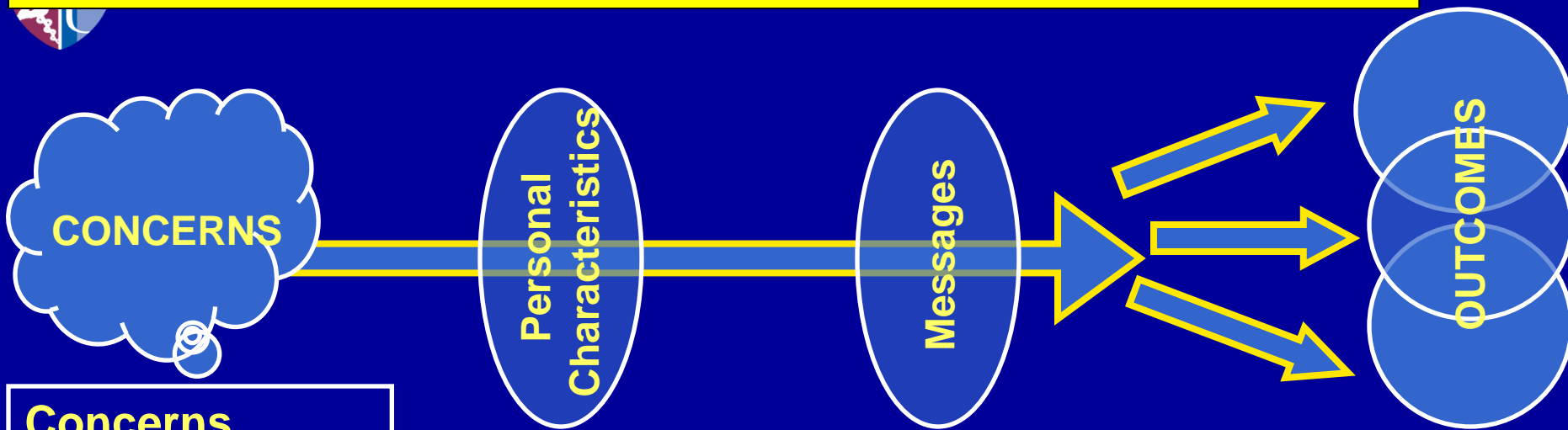
- Credibility of message
- Credibility of messenger
- Cultural appropriateness of message
- Delivery mechanisms
- **Behavioral connectedness**

Outcomes

- **+/- Pos/neg behavioral adaptation**
- +/- Trust
- +/- Social change



IMPORTANT FACTORS/PROCESSES DURING THE RECOVERY PERIOD



Concerns

- Hlth. status
- Guilt
- Survivor guilt
- Anger
- Soc. justice
- Fear of future
- Grief
- Bereavement
- Soc./community Change
- Economic loss
- Crisis of faith
- **What Should I do?**

Personal Characteristics

- Hlth. status
- Resilience
- Impairment
- Experience
- Soc. support
- Med/Psy risk factors
- Remaining resources
- Spiritual/faith context

Messages

- Credibility of message
- Credibility of messenger
- Cultural appropriateness of message
- Delivery mechanisms
- **Behavioral connectedness**

Outcomes

- +/- Understanding
- +/- Trust
- Social change
- +/- Anger/revenge
- +/- Litigation
- **Pos/neg behavioral adaptation**

Focus Risk Communication On:

Communicating Beyond the Written and Spoken Word

Communication Takes Many Forms. Communication Through...

- Written and spoken word
- Behavior
- Symbols and rituals
- Images
- Social media



Understanding Symbols And Rituals

- Symbols and rituals help when the written and spoken word fails us
- They have both idiosyncratic and shared meaning



Understanding Symbols And Rituals

- They promote a shared experience
- They can help unite occupational, cultural, religious, and generational groups
- They can help heal divisions



Understanding Symbols & Rituals

We can learn much from:

- The faith community
- The military



Communication Through Images

Images Are Like Projective Tests

*Behavioral Health Professionals Can Help
Risk Communicators Appreciate The
Projective Nature/Power Of Images*



“I never want to see this image published again! You have no idea what this does to the family of this child every time they see it. It re-traumatizes them!”

-Oklahoma City Psychologist

“This picture has probably been more responsible for bringing donated funds into this community to help the survivors than any other single image.”

-AP reporter

Communication Through Behavior



What does the behavior tell us about the risk of the event?



What does the behavior tell us about the leader?

What Do The Communicators Communicate Through Their Behavior?



Your Mother Was Right!

“Actions Speak Louder Than Words”

- Are messengers aware of the impact of their behavior on others/on credibility?
- Are the actions of messengers consistent with their messages?
- Does the behavior and the message support the *Five Essential Elements of Early Intervention*?



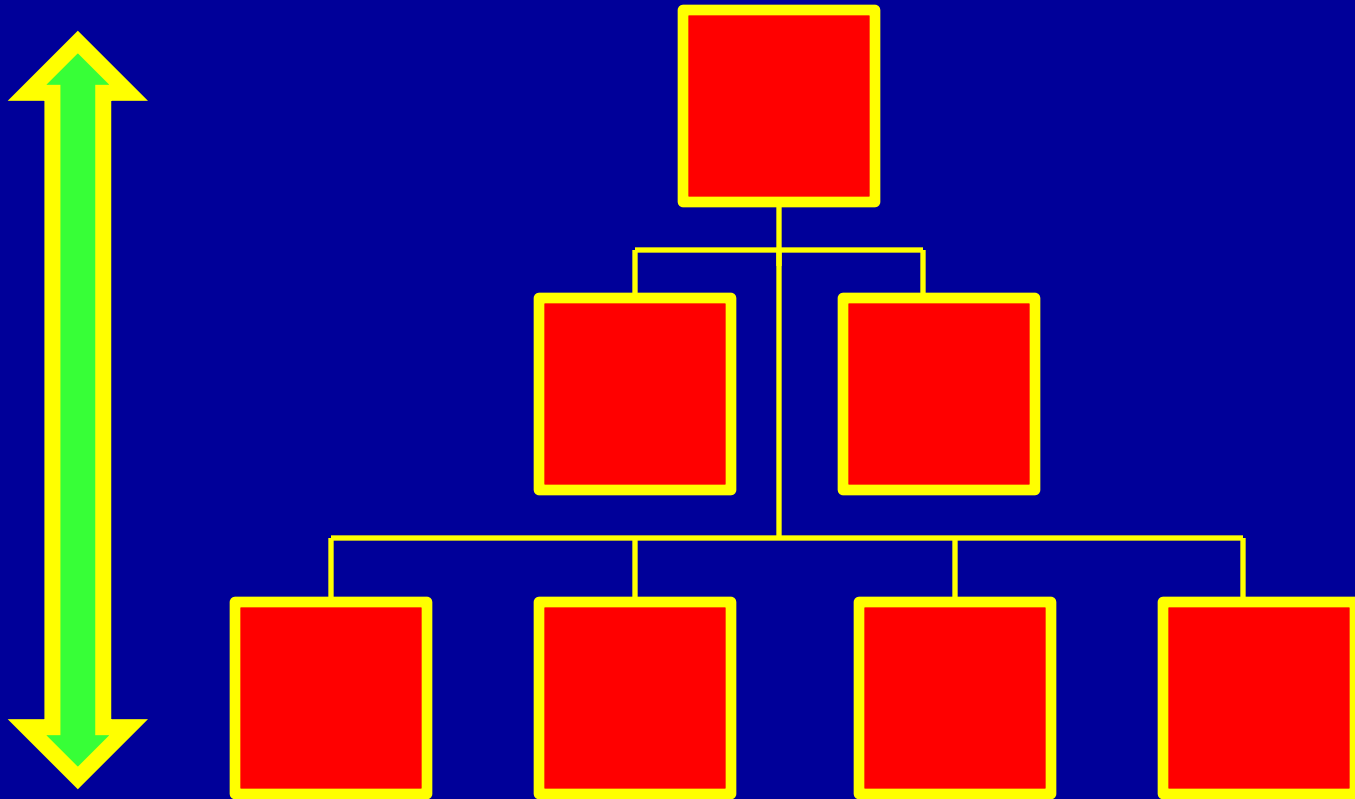
Risk and Crisis Communication...By Role



Communication By Leaders

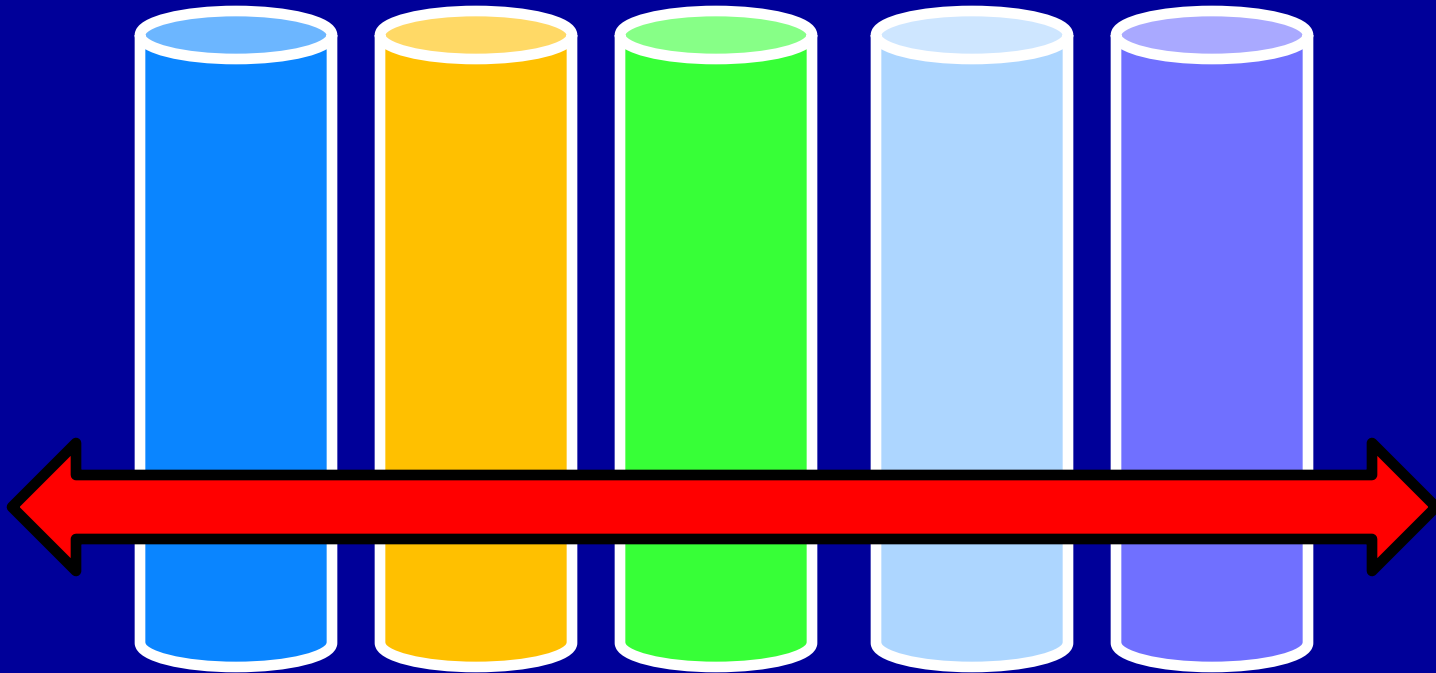
- Multiple purposes:
 - Promote healthy pro-social behavior
 - Risk/status/education/anticipatory guidance to population
 - Inter-/Intra-organization support/direction/integration
 - Manage expectations
 - Maintain political support

Communication Up And Down The Organizational Chart

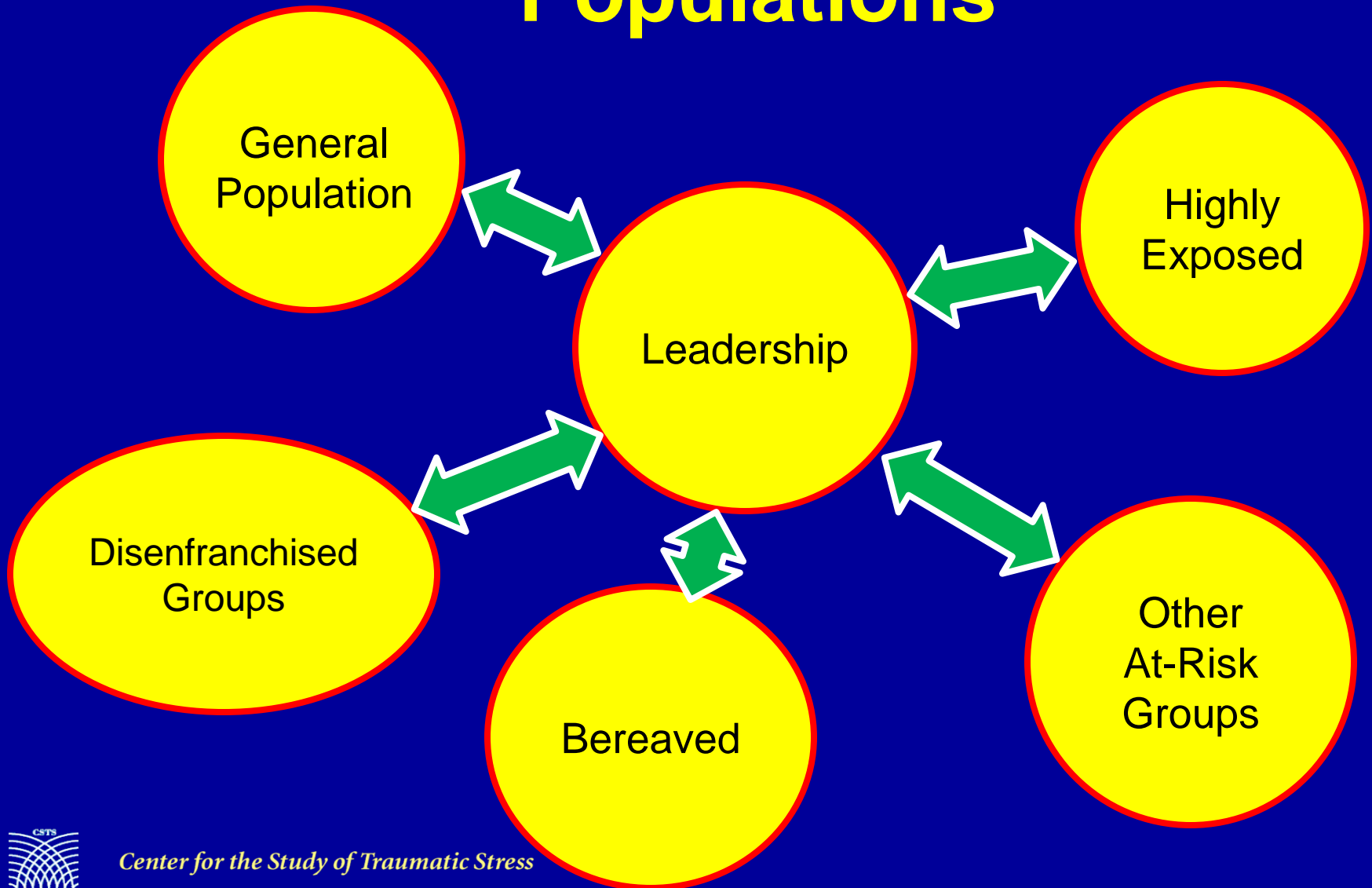




Communication Across The Stovepipes



Communication With Populations



Improved/Sophisticated/Targeted Communication on Complex Issues: Dangerousness

- Perfect storm of stigma, complexity, emotion, confirmatory bias
- How, what, and by whom are critical communications strategies
- Resource:

Responding to a High-Profile
Tragic Incident Involving a Person
with a Serious Mental Illness
A Toolkit for State Mental Health Commissioners
(NASMHPD)

Improved/Sophisticated/Targeted Communication on Complex Issues: Stigma

- Challenging the Public Stigma of Mental Illness:
A Meta-Analysis of Outcome Studies (*Corrigan et al.,
2012, Psychiatric Services 63(10)*)
 - Overall, both education and contact had positive effects on reducing stigma for adults and adolescents with a mental illness.
 - However, contact was better than education at reducing stigma for **adults**.
 - For **adolescents**, the opposite pattern was found: education was more effective.
 - Overall, face-to-face contact was more effective than contact by video.

Message Mapping...

Based on the work of Vincent Covello, Ph.D., Tim Tinker, Ph.D.

- Anticipate the questions (e.g., questions of dying patients, issues of vaccine hesitancy)
- Decide on the messages (using factors such as consistency, honesty, saying “I don’t know”, etc.)
- Map the messages using templates
- Apply to various mediums (e.g., TV, radio, press conference, staff meeting, social media, etc.)
- Practice the messages
- Update the messages

CCO Template

- Compassion
- Conviction
- Optimism
- Example: “I share the sense of tragedy with you. This hospital will continue responding with everything we have. We will emerge stronger and even better prepared.”

1N = 3P Template

- People tend to hear negative messages more easily than positive messages in a crisis
- It will take three positive messages to equal the impact of one negative message

27/9/3 Template

- Human attention is limited in a crisis
- Limit messages to:
 - No more than 27 words
 - 9 seconds
 - 3 messages
- Example: “ I share the sense of tragedy with you. This hospital will continue responding with everything we have. We will emerge stronger and even better prepared.” (26 words)

Primacy / Recency Template

- We tend to remember the first thing we hear
- Next we tend to remember the last thing we hear
- We remember the middle message(s) least
- Put your most important message first, your second most important message last, least important in the middle

Mayor Giuliani's statement in response to the question, “How many casualties do you expect in total?”

"The number of casualties will be more than any of us can bear ultimately. But we're going to get over the crisis. We're going to help everyone. And we're somehow going to get over our tremendous grief and our loss. And we're also going to rebuild the city and make it even stronger than it ever was before."

CCO template
58 words
3 messages

Use Templates In Other Contexts...

“I can’t begin to understand how difficult this is for you. I can promise that I will be beside you throughout this journey. Together we’ll find ways to make things work.”

CCO template
31 words
3 messages

Ways In Which Behavioral Health Can Contribute to Risk/Crisis Communication:

- Understanding cognition/affect/behavior under stress
- Impact of psychosocial processes (e.g., confirmatory bias)
- Trajectory of individual and collective crisis response/recovery processes

Ways In Which Behavioral Health Can Contribute To Risk/Crisis Communication:

- Communication beyond the written and spoken word (e.g., symbols, rituals, images, behavior)
- Initiate early intervention strategies through communications



Improved/Sophisticated/Targeted Communication for Complex Issues

Thinking Outside The Box
Strategies We Can Use Now

Communicating Through the Arts and Literature

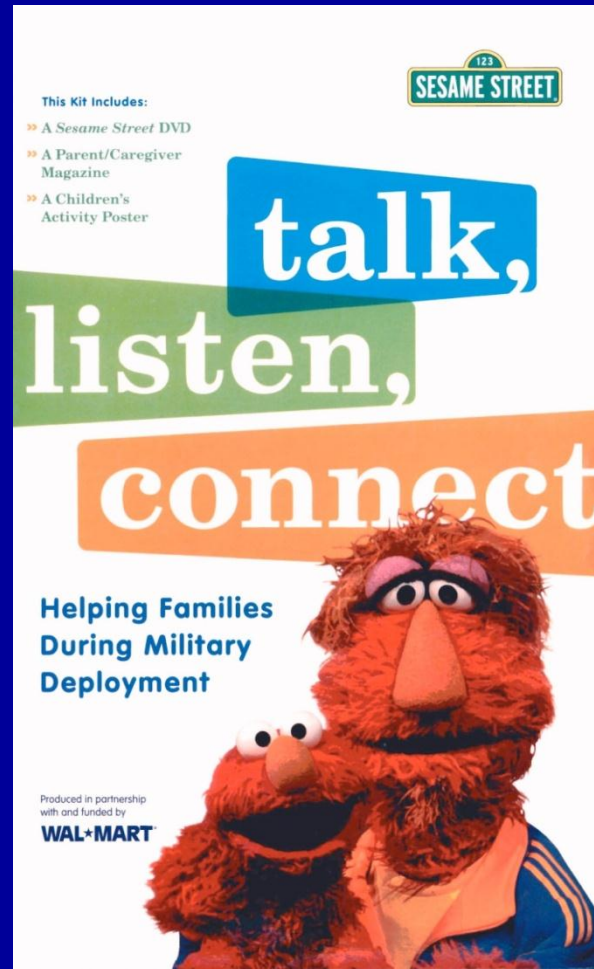
Improved/Sophisticated/Targeted Communication on Complex Issues: Stigma

- Uses all the tools we have
- Be creative
- Measure efficacy





Improved/Sophisticated/Targeted Communication on Complex Issues: Public Education for Military Families

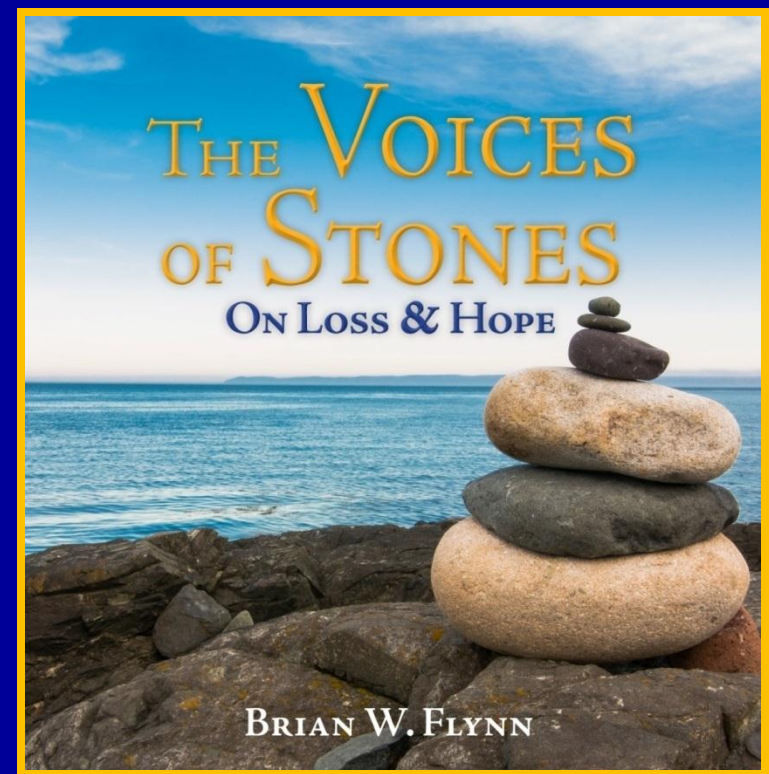
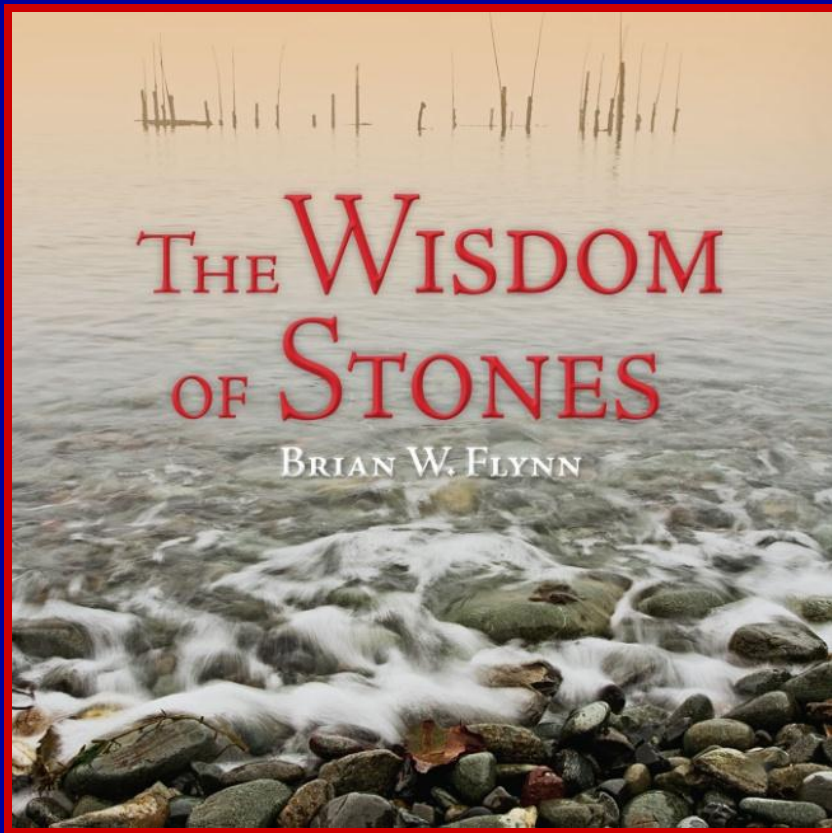


Theater of WAR

- Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*
- Sophocles was a General
- Ancient Greek drama was a form of storytelling, communal therapy, and ritual reintegration for combat veterans by combat veterans



Communicating Through the Popular Press

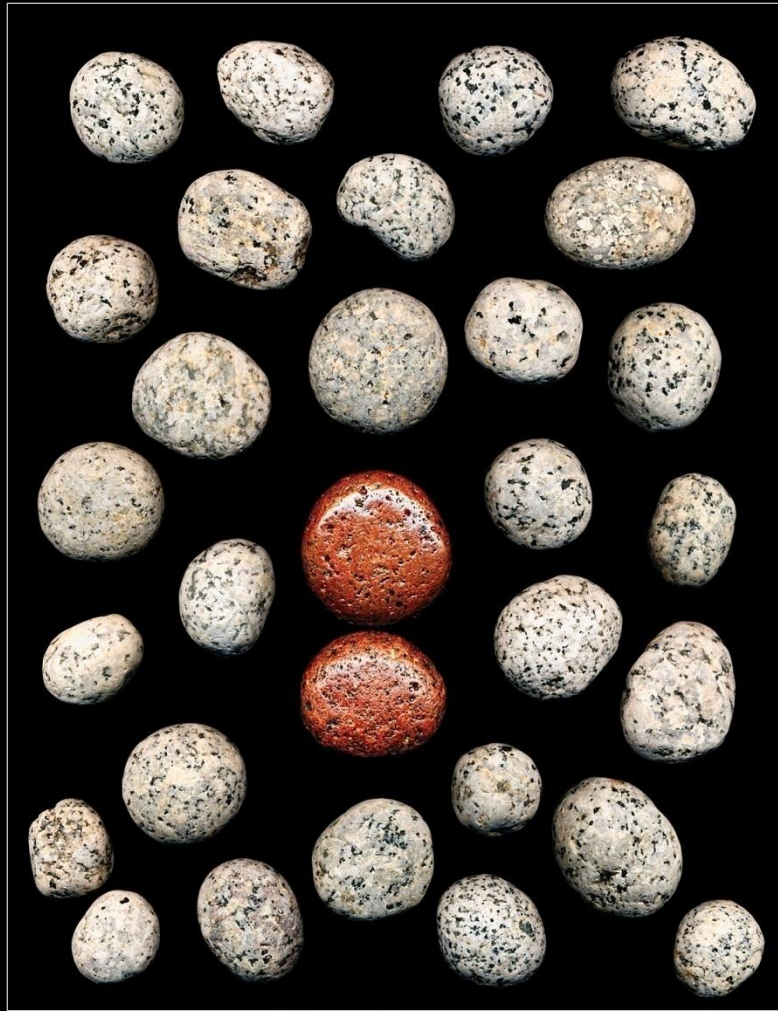




Be gentle with those among us who are fragile



Give comfort, care, and welcome to those who are
With us only until the tides of their lives change.



*Somehow, in a crowded world,
we still find each other.*



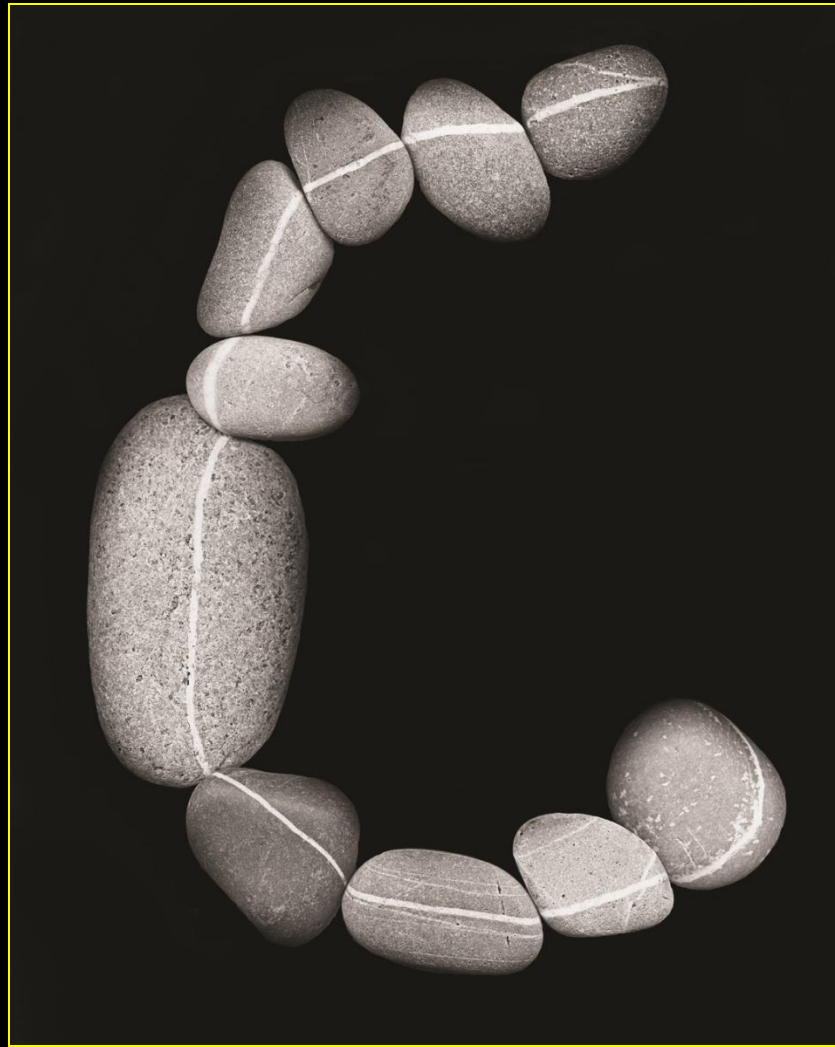
It is often the smallest things in life
that give us the most joy.
And it is the smallest among us
from whom we take life's most important lessons.



There is comfort in gathering with others and being held
by those who have themselves been broken.
They understand us.



if we get close enough, we can find our connectedness.



What connects us is often not straightforward.
But the discovery is part of life's joy.



Final Thought About Risk/Crisis Communication...

There is an evidence base.

There is an experience base.

There are credible experts in this area.

Use them.

Don't reinvent the wheel.

Get creative.

Think outside the box

Resources:

Vincent Covello, Ph.D.

Peter Sandman, Ph.D.

Tim Tinker, Ph.D.

