

Get Yourself Out of the Way

1. **Practicing Emotional First Aid is simple but not easy.** Emotional First Aid Skills are simple and straightforward. However, what is not easy for the helper is to meet the needs of the survivor and not his own needs. All human beings are filled with values, beliefs, strengths, weaknesses, opinions and prejudices. These are characteristics which make us unique individuals. However, they also get in our way when we try to help.

So, a basic core challenge for you as a helper will be to put all your “stuff” aside and to focus on what is best for the survivor.

2. **How do you learn to not let your own beliefs and personality and your own needs get in the way of helping a survivor?** You learn by becoming **self aware**. You need to be aware of those things about yourself that are most likely to “rear their ugly heads” when helping a survivor.

Specifically, you need to be aware of your **helping tendencies**. All helpers approach the helping relationship with a history of helping others and of being helped. As a result of this past history, all of us have developed opinions about what “effective” helping is. Those ways of helping that have worked in the past tend to become part of our “helping repertoire”. Those things that didn’t work we tend to discard.

Here are some possibilities of what your helping repertoire may be. Try to identify yourself.

Self-Centered Helper

“I love helping. It makes me FEEL SO GOOD. And I’m really good at it!”

The Professor

“Let me give you some good ADVICE.”

Super Helper

“I’ll take care of EVERYTHING.”

The Cheerleader

“Let’s think POSITIVELY.”

Mr./Ms. Fixit

“What’s the PROBLEM? We’ll take care of this in no time.”

The Saint

“Let us PRAY.”

The Judge

“HOW in the world did you let this happen to you?”

3. Once you have identified your “helping tendency” your challenge is not to let it interfere with helping the survivor. Remember, your goal is to meet the needs of the survivor and not to automatically do what you think “helping” is all about.