REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

September 11 Memorial Issue

Volume 8, Number 3 Summer 2002

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

REFLECTIONS: NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING (015-2950)
is a refereed journal published quarterly by the Department of Social Work,
California State University Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Boulevard, Long Beach, California, 90840-0902

REFLECTIONS
NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

Volume 8 **Summer 2002** **Number 3**

September 11 Memorial Issue

Special Guest Editors: Alex Gitterman, Ph.D., Connecticut University School of Social Work
and Andrew Malekoff, MSW, North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center

Cover photograph and all original photographs by Andrew Malekoff

PRINTED QUARTERLY BY **THE CSULB UNIVERSITY PRESS**

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Jillian Jimenez, Ph.D.

This issue of ***Reflections*** commemorates the first year anniversary of the terrorist attacks on New York City, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania. The issue is dedicated to those who lost loved ones on this terrible day in American history. Written from the first person perspective of those who comforted others who endured the attacks, these narratives offer us a powerful way to share in the lived experience of that day and all the many struggle-filled days that followed, and continue to catch us in the painful net of grief.

Looking back a year later, I can see how many other things were lost that day. The sense of openness that observers like Alexis de Toqueville have noted as characterizing American life seems to have evaporated over night. Our previously felt fears of domestic and foreign enemies have been transmogrified into fear of terrorists, inside and outside our borders. Terrorism somehow seems a far worse phantom to live with than invasion or even nuclear attack—the manifestations of war that galvanized Americans in earlier periods in this century. The increasingly closed nature of our society, the contraction of our civil liberties, the shutting down of dissent, have been accompanied by a general disinterest in serious *Homefront* problems such as health care, discrimination, inadequate incomes for families and children and other aspects of the Progressive agenda. The increased suspicion of those we are eager to call foreigners (as opposed to immigrants) darkens our appetite for new experience and our optimism about our resilience. This shutting down is one of the great losses we continue to incur from 9/11. On this one-year anniversary, ***Reflections*** hopes its readers will remember those who perished on that day, as well as those who continue to suffer from social injustice today.

I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the special editors, Alex Gitterman and Andrew Malekoff, for their commitment to excellence that guided them through the creation of this issue.

A Landscape of the End of the 20th Century

By Rachel Feldhamer, 17, Cedarhurst, Long Island, New York (approx. 20 miles from Ground Zero)

Guest Editor's Introduction
9/11: Professional Helpers Respond

By Alex Gitterman, Ph.D. and Andrew Malekoff, MSW

During the past six months, several artists joined together to produce a soft cover book entitled *9/11: Artists Respond.* It is a collection of art, sequenced to showcase the artists' responses to "the terror that befell the world" on September 11, 2001. One nine-frame piece entitled "Please Stand By..." features a girl of about eight years old watching cartoons on television. By the third and fourth frames, the image on the screen changes to a live feed of the Twin Towers ablaze. As the little girl stands transfixed, stuffed animal in hand and her face less than twelve inches from the screen, the commentator announces, "We interrupt this program to take you live..." the little girl turns away and calls, "Mommy..." The next three frames begin with her mother dropping a basket of laundry. Then, with her face contorted in anguish, she embraces her daughter to shield her from the unrelenting images. The final frame is a close up of the little girl asking, "Mommy, when are the cartoons gonna come back on?"

Capturing the spirit of *Artists Respond* in this special issue of *Reflections*, human service workers respond. We, the editors, a social work professor (Alex) and an agency administrator and practitioner (Andy), both living within twenty-five miles of the epicenter of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, invited a survivor and human services professionals to share personal or professional experiences. We wanted to add the professional helper voice to a growing archive of personal stories in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States. We asked for narratives from persons who experienced and responded to those affected by the attacks on New York City, Washington DC,. and Pennsylvania.

In our call for papers, we suggested several narratives: on direct contact with survivors and those who have lost loved ones, colleagues, and friends; work with businesses that have been devastated by the attacks; interventions with schools, students, and faculty; responses by human services professionals to the disaster and to caring for their own caregivers; trauma and bereavement work with people from children to elders; participation in community efforts such as vigils, prayer services, and other commemorative activities; and interactions with firefighters, police officers, rescue workers, medical personnel, and others.

As we write, these suggestions seem to casually fall to the page, yet we are acutely aware that this literary project is different from all of the others we have tackled over the years. "Things have changed forever" has become a familiar refrain since 9/11. Some would say that the expression has reached cliché status. But the visual images (over and over) of the planes crashing into the first and second Tower and into the Pentagon, people leaping to their death, and policemen and firemen running into the crumbling buildings pierced a lasting imprint in our memories. These images continue to haunt us and will be part of our national psyche forever. While

still trying to comprehend the enormity of the loss, our citizens and political leaders responded with great courage and resolve. And so did our profession! Little in our professional education has prepared us for unfathomable tragedies. Yet, we have responded in very powerful ways, with commitment and competence. This special issue attempts to capture our professional zeal and skill.

In this special issue we have included narratives written by authors all across the United States. Some of the places they take us to are the 90th floor of Tower 2; a walk along the streets of the South Bronx; the Staten Island Red Cross office; a small town in Pennsylvania; public schools and colleges in Long Island, New York City, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin; a memorial service at the World Trade Center; a boat ride on the Hudson River; a trip to the Family Assistance Center at Pier 94 where thousands of surviving family members first provided DNA evidence and ultimately collected urns with ashes from the World Trade Center; a blood drive at a mosque; a funeral service for a captain in the New York Fire Department; an East Harlem after-school program; an elementary school in Oklahoma City; and social work schools' classrooms.

We meet children of all ages who lost parents; people who lost spouses, partners, colleagues, and friends; young and old, civilians and rescue workers suffering trauma; employees who lost their livelihoods; men and women who cannot cry, and those who cannot stop crying. We read about the tyranny of imagination and zero degrees of separation;

Photo courtesy of ABC News

and a beguiling question, "Who debriefs the common person?"

Who debriefs the common person? It occurs to us that this question speaks beyond 9/11 to the enormity and impact of trauma and loss on the world stage. The attack on Pearl Harbor, the bombing in Oklahoma, and the assassination of JFK are the kind of world-shattering events and monumental turning points, frozen moments in time that stopped Americans in their tracks long enough for each experience to be transformed into a personal story, a narrative that we tell over and over when asked "Where were you when?" September 11, 2001, is one of those frozen moments, yet different. It taps a vulnerability that we have not known, or been aware of, as universally as we now do. And if we did, we never slowed down long enough to allow ourselves to know.

For many weeks after September 11th, walking the streets of New York was an eerie adventure. The energy of the city seemed lost, faces on the subway were vacant, and the buzz was gone. Amid the silence, people started to see one another and connect in ways we have not known on such a grand scale. We joined together in our loss and pain, reached out to strangers like never before, and banded together, determined not merely to survive but to thrive. There are signs of a return to "normal" as the honeymoon of goodwill fades. Yet, we cannot afford to abandon awareness of both the frozen moment that September 11 has become and the aftermath. In this special issue of ***Reflections,*** we present personal stories of professional helping that we hope will help us to remember what we lost and what we have become.

Saved by Each Other

By Denise Germain Rabinowitz, Vice President, Fiduciary Trust Company International

The following narrative describes the random events that allowed the author and two of her colleagues to escape from World Trade Tower 2 only minutes before it collapsed.

I arrived at my office at Fiduciary Trust Company International on the 90th floor of Tower 2 of the World Trade Center on September 11th at about 8:20 A.M., my usual time. A 75-year-old colleague, who had worked at the Trust Company for 40 years and now worked only on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, was there. He and I went to the 96th floor cafeteria for coffee. On the way back, we stopped at the 90th floor reception area where I picked up a package from a law firm.

Returning to my office, I turned on my computer and was about to access my voice mail when there was an extremely loud "sonic boom" that sounded strangely muffed—like dynamite from far away—that caused Tower 2 to shake slightly. When I looked out my window which faced southeast with a view of Brooklyn, the Brooklyn Bridge, and Queens, I saw thousands of swirling, glittering pieces of paper that looked like a snowstorm or a weird Wall Street promotional event with large amounts or paper being dropped from the sky. I learned the next day that the glitter was actually blown out glass from Tower I.

Not being able to comprehend what this loud, unusual noise and this glittering, swirling paper were, I ran to another lawyer's office that faced north from where the noise seemed to be coming. Looking out her window, I saw a huge ball of fire exploding out from Tower 1 and, about parallel to where I was, a line of intense fire—like looking into a ceramic kiln—going across one side of Tower 1 to the other. I also smelled a strong odor of gasoline (later learning that it was jet fuel).

Upon seeing the fireball, I believe I went into shock, thinking that a bomb had somehow been detonated inside Tower 1 and trying to process what I was seeing, hearing, and smelling. I heard the secretary, whose desk was in front of my office, yelling "I'm getting out of here, I'm getting out of here" as I ran back to my office to call my husband. I remember thinking his recorded greeting was interminably long and that I should just leave the building. I left a message saying, "Hi, Jon. It's 8:45. Building 1 in the World Trade Center just blew up. Everyone is ok here. I'm just going downstairs now. Bye." When I listened to this message about a month later, I had no idea that I had said Building 1 had blown up and could not believe the terror in my voice. Tragically, many people who reached loved ones when the plane hit Tower 1 stayed on the telephone, not knowing that would cost them their lives.

I stood in my office another 15-20 seconds looking in disbelief out my window and deciding whether or not to take a bag with my work shoes, cell phone, sunglasses, newspaper, etc. I left the bag there thinking it would be a hindrance if I had to walk down 90 flights of stairs. I left my office as my colleague was coming out of his office. The secretary was gone and I assumed she was on her way out of the building. We checked the office in between my colleague's and mine and saw no one in the trust and estates area or in the corporate area of the Legal Department as we went out to the main corridor on the 90th floor. Unknown to us, 6 employees out of the 18 in the Trust Company's Legal Department were there that morning and 3 of

them, all in the corporate area, died. Apparently, the secretary who died went to find a friend in an interior, windowless office who also died, as did the corporate General Counsel who was in a meeting on the 94th floor at that time.

It was now two minutes after the plane hit Tower I. There were about 40 to 50 people in the main corridor, but I only remember seven of them. I was quite aware of the two people on my left and the two people on my right, all of whom were from the Tax Department and my colleague behind me. I also remember seeing the young Tax Department employee who had volunteered to be the 90th floor fire marshal, the head of the Trust Administration Department, and the head of Human Resources. I learned the next day that all of them, together with approximately 25 other employees on the 90th floor, perished. Although I knew most of the other people, I do not remember who they were as my mind seemed to be blocking out much of what was going on around me. I felt quite puzzled and anxious about what was happening but not afraid, and I focused on listening for instructions from the Port Authority Command Center as fire drills had instructed us to do.

There was no panic or yelling as people waited for information to come from the fire alarm box. Many people felt that the people in Tower I were in great danger but that "fortunately" they were in Tower 2 and could wait 5, 10, 15 minutes for an assessment of the situation before deciding to evacuate or return to their offices, not knowing that they had only 2 or 3 minutes to make telephone calls, find friends or wait in a corridor—that is, do anything other than leave the building. About one minute later, the head of Human Resources, seeing that the local elevators were already filled with many people waiting to get on, said that if people wanted to take the stairs to the 78th floor, she thought the express elevators were still working. The 78th floor was a "sky lobby" where people taking express elevators from the ground floor to 78 walked across a "hotel-like" lobby to the local bank of elevators that took people to offices located on the 79th through 104th floors. The remaining floors contained air conditioning and heating units, and elevator shafts, for the building.

My colleague and I happened to be standing opposite one of only two stairwells for the building and immediately decided to take the stairs. I assumed that at least the four people standing with us would do the same. When I learned late the next day that they were missing and presumed dead, I could not believe it. I had assumed that if my colleague and I, who had "wasted " several precious minutes, had escaped, everyone at the Trust Company had as well. In the next several days, learning that 95 friends and colleagues had died, I felt the attack was a bad nightmare from which I would awaken and be back in my office with everyone there. I still cannot completely believe that 10 of the 12 people I saw that morning died and that I will never see these 95 people again.

I often feel guilty that I did not urge the people around me to take the stairs. Unfortunately, everyone was acting in a total vacuum of information or on misinformation after seeing and hearing things that made no sense and were completely out of the realm of anyone's prior experience. I think in many instances the decision to stay or leave was a group decision (even if the group was two people) revolving around the people with whom you worked who were there that morning. My colleague and I had immediately formed our own "group." Although we did not talk about it at the time, each of us had independently determined, and continued to reinforce that determination, that the fire in Tower 1 was a significant threat to people in Tower 2, that we had to get out of thc building as quickly as possible, and that we were not going to wait for official instructions about what to do. Nevertheless, I feel it was still

random luck, timing, and whether your office had a view and, if so, what view it had, that enabled me to escape when 95 out of approximately 175 employees there that morning did not. I was shocked to see how dark and narrow the stairs were. There was room for only two people at a time to descend the stairs and, except for knowing my colleague was in back of me, I had no idea who was in front or in back of me.

It was about 8:57 A.M. when we got to the 78th floor sky lobby where 200 to 300 people were coming out of the local elevators, talking about what to do, or waiting for one of the express elevators to take them to the Concourse (ground) level. Again, there was concern and confusion but no panic, yelling, or pushing onto elevators. Fortuitously, the stairwell my colleague and I had been in opened near the bank of express elevators rather than on the other side of the sky lobby where we would have been behind many people. The only person I saw on the 78th floor from Fiduciary was from the Tax Department. He had left his office as soon as he heard the "sonic boom." Shortly before we arrived on 78, he had offered money to the corporate general counsel who had left her purse in her 90th floor office which was next to mine, and suggested they go to the Concourse to discuss what to do. She decided to go back and, of course, perished. Several times a week I still wonder if I could have changed her mind if my colleague and I had

Photo courtesy of ABC News

gotten to 78 before she left.

There were approximately eight express elevators going across one side of the sky lobby. The Tax Department employee suggested that the three of us continue taking the stairs to the Concourse since it made no sense to take an elevator, if one should happen to come, with Tower 1 on fire. He also felt that too many people would get on, causing the elevator to get stuck or the door not to close. My colleague said he could not go down 78 more flights. Less than a minute later, as we were trying to decide what to do, an elevator near where we were standing opened. Consciously or unconsciously, my colleague and I had decided to stay together that morning. Without further discussion, the three of us got on the elevator, which turned out to be a life-saving decision that 5 minutes later would have been a life-ending decision. Again, the total randomness of living or dying that day, based on decisions being made in a total vacuum, is something for which there are no answers that I think about every day. Had we taken the stairs, which was the "smart" thing to do given the information we had at the time, my colleague would have needed to rest at least every three or four flights and we would have been in the stairwell when Tower 2 collapsed at 9:59 A.M.

I saw no other Trust Company employees on this elevator, which had about 25 people in it. At least 10 more people could have gotten on this elevator but I think many were taking a "wait and see" attitude, possibly having heard the Port Authority message over the public address system—which for some reason neither my colleague nor I heard—to the effect that Tower 2 was secure and that people should go back to their offices and wait for further instructions. I am certain that many people who were trying to decide whether to leave or stay a while longer decided to stay in reliance on this official message. It is infuriating and incomprehensible to me that this message was sent from the Port Authority Command Center, when so many "lay persons," seeing and hearing the events that morning knew they had to leave as quickly as possible. In the elevator I was fixated on the door, thinking the two-to-three minute descent was taking forever. Again, no one seemed panicked, just tense and concerned. Ironically, not knowing the life-threatening danger all of us were in was a great help to people who could focus their minds on getting out and a fatal hindrance to those who decided to stay or were ambivalent about leaving.

We got to the ground floor about 9 A.M., probably one of the last two or three elevators to get to the Concourse before the plane hit the 78th floor, which would have either severed the elevator cables or caused burning jet fuel to pour down the elevator shafts killing people still in the express elevators. The closest exits leading out to Liberty Street (on the south side of Tower 2) had all been blocked off. Looking out the glass revolving doors and floor-to-ceiling windows, I saw many cars on fire and chunks of concrete and other debris falling and on the ground from Tower I. As I had twelve minutes earlier, I tried to process what I was seeing without being able to do so. For the first time that morning, however, I felt in imminent danger in a surreal, unbelievable situation. The police, many of whom probably died that morning, told us to go through the Concourse to Building 4, a small building connected to Tower 2 that faced Church Street. Hundreds of people were running in many directions and in the confusion, my colleague and I got separated from the Tax Department employee, who went through the lobby of Tower I and made it to safety.

Holding on to each other, we began walking fast as others ran by us since my colleague could not run. About three minutes later, as we got to the top of an escalator and were about to go out the glass revolving doors of Building 4, the plane hit Tower 2. There was

another deafening "sonic boom"; the building shook and debris came raining down on people who had just run by us and were already outside. Again, there had been a completely random combination of timing and luck. I realized the next day that, if my colleague and I had been separated after leaving the elevator, I would have run out of Building 4 and probably been hit with debris or burning jet fuel.

Completely terrorized, thinking that bombs were going to go off all over and that I could do nothing to protect myself, I felt I was going to die within minutes. It was as if, with no warning at all, my place of work had turned into a combat zone with nowhere to hide and no way to defend myself. Everyone screamed and ran down the stairs next to the escalator we had just come up. There was complete pandemonium in the Concourse with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people trying to escape. With my colleague and I gripping each other for dear life, another group of police directed us across the Concourse, past escalators leading to the Path trains, and to stairs and escalators leading to revolving doors out of Building 5 on the corner of Church and Vesey Street.

When we got out of Building 5 about 9:06 A.M., the police were yelling that this was a terrorist attack and we should leave the area immediately. Dozens of fire engines, emergency service vehicles, and police cars lined Church Street, and some injured people were being helped or waiting to be helped. It felt like being in a horror movie yet knowing the horror all around was terrifyingly real. There were thousands of people on Church Street, the side streets leading to the Trade Center, Broadway, and coming from the subway looking in disbelief and shock at these two massive buildings on fire. In contrast to all of these people, I just wanted to leave the area as quickly as possible. I suggested to my colleague that we try to take the subway at the Brooklyn Bridge stop to Grand Central. Walking north through the crowds, I continually turned around, mesmerized by the sight of these buildings on fire yet not believing what I was seeing. As we went into the subway, we passed people coming out, and we took the train with people who had no idea what was happening, which added to the surrealness of what I had just experienced.

When we got to Grand Central about 9:45 A.M., the Met Life Building was evacuating so my colleague and I separated. He took a subway to his home in Forest Hills. Not knowing how to reach my husband, who, I learned later, thought I had probably died, I was able to call my sister from a pay phone just about the time Tower 2 collapsed. I was reunited with my husband about 30 minutes later, shortly after Tower 1 collapsed. It was only then that I learned that the two Towers had fallen and that two planes, not bombs, had hit these buildings.

What I lived through on September 11th will be with me forever. I shudder inwardly whenever I think about how close I came to dying that day. Every day I think about my friends and colleagues who died and their families, especially those ten colleagues I remember seeing or being with that morning. Every day I also think about how extraordinarily lucky I am to have survived because of a random combination of factors that particular morning, including where my office was located; my husband not being in his office; being with a colleague who confirmed my sense that we had to leave the building as soon as possible rather than being alone or with others who felt there was time to assess the situation; being near a stairwell on the 90th floor and an elevator on the 78th floor; not hearing the Port Authority message; and helping my 75-year-old colleague who could only walk, not run, when we got to the Concourse.

I hope that with the passing of time and with the support of family and friends I will be able to put my feelings about these events into a corner of my brain, so that only occasionally will I feel what I now feel everyday.

Rescue and Recovery: Providing Crisis Intervention to the Families of the Victims of the World Trade Center Attack

By Grace A. Telesco, Lieutenant, New York City Police Department

In this narrative the author reflects on the effective and counterproductive elements of the mental health response provided by the Family Assistance Center in New York City.

I write this paper as a retrospective analysis and critique of the mental health response to the families of the victims of the World Trade Center attacks, coordinated by the New York Police Department's Community Affairs Mental Health Team under my leadership. My analysis focuses on the uniqueness of the response following the disaster and the eclectic collaboration of the crisis workers. In the analysis, I place an emphasis on the integral parts of the intervention and describe what made them effective, as well as identifying the elements that seemed counterproductive. This paper takes the reader through the days and weeks following September 11th at the Family Assistance Center where over 5,000 families were offered services and crisis intervention.

A large part of the response centered on providing crisis intervention to families and individuals. The term "mental health response" was more of a misnomer than an accurate description of the actual services provided by crisis workers and clinicians because traditional mental health services were not offered, nor were they appropriate. One of the most important lessons that I learned during those ten critical weeks was the importance of remaining non-intrusive, non-judgmental, and empathetic and of responding in a way that helped to restore dignity, power, and security for those individuals who were at various stages of the crisis spectrum.

The individuals and families who fled, first to the morgue in the early hours following the attack, later to the armory, and ultimately to Pier 94 at the Family Assistance Center, displayed various characteristics of crisis behavior. In the first few weeks, I watched the reactions of individuals: desperation, frustration, denial, shock, disbelief, and anger. A classification of "pre-mourning" was probably the most fitting during this time. As time moved on, despair and grief became more evident as people began to move into deeper stages of mourning when no word came of any survivors.

Individuals' shock, anger, disbelief, denial, and grief were spoken through words of many languages and in the tears, gestures, and body posture that surpassed the barrier that language can sometimes be to effective communication. A sea of humanity, displayed in the photos held in the hands of thousands representing the missing and the dead, symbolized the severity of the enormous tragedy. On a cognitive level, the crisis workers and service providers knew this was an enormous task before them and one that would require a unique and eclectic response. On an emotional and spiritual level, there is no training to prepare the practitioner for such an assignment.

In the days and weeks following the tragic events of September 11th, various agencies and organizations became part of a unique support team. This team consisted of law enforcement, medical personnel, mental health

practitioners, spiritual care providers, pet therapy professionals, and people from Oklahoma City who had lost loved ones in the Murrah Federal Building bombing on April 19, 1995. The Community Assistance Unit from the Mayor's office and the New York Police Department's Community Affairs Section coordinated the delivery of a variety of services. These services included preparation of the missing persons reports, DNA sampling, release of patient and deceased lists, distribution of death certificates and memorial urns, and ultimately escorting the families to Ground Zero. Many social services were provided at the Family Assistance Center by various agencies and organizations; however this analysis focuses specifically on the mental health response.

The agency responsible for the safety, security, and coordination of service delivery was my unit in the New York City Police Department, the Community Affairs Section. As a police lieutenant with a doctorate in the mental health field and extensive background in crisis intervention, I coordinated the inter-agency mental health response along with a team of officers chosen because of their expertise in crisis intervention.

The response began for us on September 11th at approximately 1:30 P.M. at the city morgue, where my police mental health team, consisting of only five officers at that time, was involved in assisting hundreds of families with the preparation of the "missing persons report." That first day's response seemed to never end and in a surreal way just became the next day and the next day and the next day. Those first few days following the attacks, prior to the arrival of the Red Cross, clinicians volunteered their services, offering support to the police mental health team and assisting in crisis intervention for the families who came to the morgue en masse. The team helped families negotiate a traumatic and chaotic bureaucratic process. In the days that followed, a Family Center was set up at the Armory on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan and was later moved to Pier 94. The police mental health team, with the assistance of volunteer Red Cross mental health service providers from all over the country, and city department of mental health practitioners provided support and crisis intervention. A spiritual care team representing various faiths was also on hand to offer support. At this point in the process a more formalized mental health response was in place and the police mental health team continued to take the lead and coordinate the intervention.

Early on in the pre-mourning phase, some individuals pleaded with us to be allowed access to Ground Zero so they could help find their loved one; others hoped to find them wandering disoriented in lower Manhattan; still others believed that their friend, mother, lover, partner, son, or daughter, whose "missing person" photo they carried with them, was unconscious and unidentified in a hospital. One woman was screaming in a rage that she wanted to go and "dig her baby brother out of the rubble."

Most of all people wanted their questions answered and neither the police nor the mental health practitioners could offer a resolution. In most cases, those in crisis screamed in frustration and active listening in silence was the only tool of intervention. The people cried in fear of the worst, while we just listened. Those of us who were aware that the worst of fears had been realized, gently and compassionately broke the news to one person at a time.

We did not pathologize the acute stress symptoms that were being presented. Instead it was answering questions: " How current is this hospital list?" "If she was disoriented she wouldn't be able to spell her name correctly. Can I check again for a different spelling?" "Is this list really all inclusive?" "Is this deceased list as of this morning?" "I have his photo and dental records, should I give it to you?" "She was wearing a red shirt that

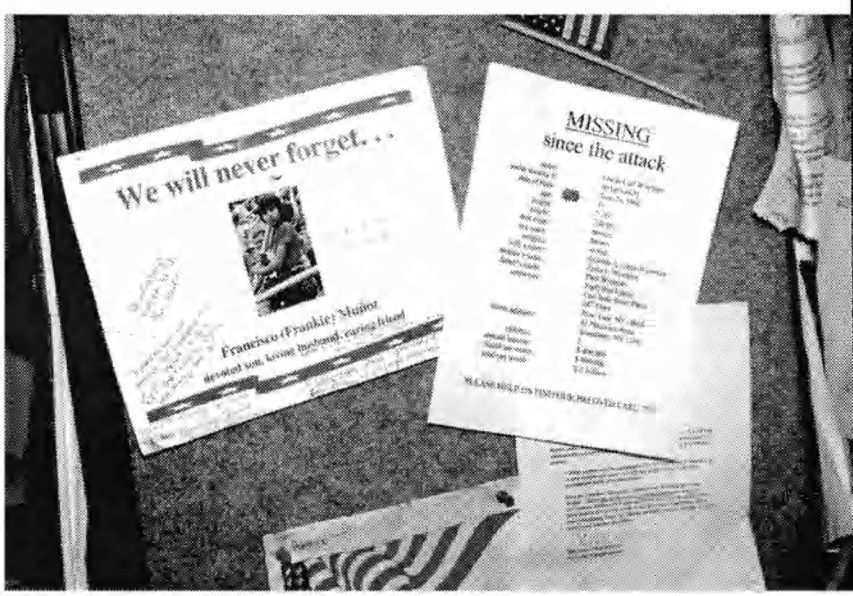
morning and she has a wrist watch engraved with her initials." "How do I fill out this nine page form?" Unsure of how to respond, crisis workers would answer, "I'm sorry, it doesn't look as though her name is here."

Those fourteen-hour days were filled with tears, unanswered questions, shock, denial, disbelief, thousands of photos, tooth brushes, dental records, and extraordinary hope that the missing were not dead and were one of "the unconscious ones in the hospital."

As the days and weeks went on and the term "rescue effort" was gently changed to "recovery" with very few bodies being recovered and no one being rescued alive, the families' emotional state turned from pre-mourning to mourning. Comfort rooms where we could offer support privately and provide crisis intervention were set up at the center. Spiritual care providers offered support to those who often turn to their faith in time of grief. Some psychiatrists assessed the need for medication in cases where a person's reaction was interfering with his or her physical well being, while other clinicians tried to draw upon their training and background for the appropriate intervention.

The most challenging part of this work for me centered on issues of organizational development. No plan of action and a lack of leadership from any particular mental health agency created confusion over hierarchical authority. Unclear roles and responsibilities led to frustration and stress for the crisis worker, who was already at risk for vicarious trauma. Ordinarily, the Red Cross maintains jurisdiction over the mental health response at airline disasters and will take the lead; however the City Department of Mental Health also assumed jurisdiction because of its responsibility for the mental health of the New York City Community. This jurisdictional struggle, the enormity of the event, and the looming possibility of another terrorist attack created an ad hoc mental health response that put my police community affairs mental health team at the center of the coordination.

On September 22nd, the Mayor's office asked my police mental health team to lead an ongoing collaborative effort to escort families by ferry to the sacred place of Ground Zero in order for them to view the site and see the place where their loved ones were last alive. In addition to the Ground Zero visit, families would be escorted to a memorial site nearby where they could pay tribute to their loved one by leaving flowers, bears, cards, etc. There was no plan to follow and little direction given, yet the police mental health team, with the guidance of Jeannie Straussman, C.S.W., from the State Office of Mental Health and Mr. Ken Thompson and Ms. Diane Leonard from Oklahoma City, put together an initiative that would prove to make the difference in the lives of thousands of mourners. The support team would consist of community affairs officers assigned to the mental health team; Red Cross mental health practitioners; spiritual care providers, including Coast Guard chaplains; paramedics; New York State troopers; New Jersey Special Operations group; city mental health practitioners and social workers; pet therapy dogs; and people from Oklahoma City.



Postings in Pennslyvania Station

We would take fifty people, three times a day, by ferry to the World Financial Center and walk them reverently and gently to the burial place of their loved one, known to the world as Ground Zero. The mission was to provide emotional, spiritual, and physical support to the families as they witnessed the reality of the incomprehensible destruction and said their good-byes. The safety of the people was of grave concern to us in light of the heightened alert and likeliness of another attack, so law enforcement professionals from all over the tri-state area provided additional security. The integrity and dignity of the process was critical to me and, therefore, photographing the families was strictly prohibited.

The grieving process is a personal one, and mourning rituals in most cultures and religious faiths are particularly private events, created and developed individually. However, because of the vast numbers of people who were deceased, grieving families were forced into a situation where their mourning became a matter of public view and the non-sectarian ritual that was created for them was to be simultaneously conducted with hundreds of strangers. Strangers to each other before the trip, these families from various races, ethnicities, and cultures ultimately shared a ritual that bonded them as a group and would not bring closure, but rather help them to begin their process of recovery.

Team Preparation and Communication

Each morning I would gather the sixteen police officers and sergeants in a circle to talk about how they were dealing with the stress, how they were feeling, and how to plan for self-care. These officers were carefully selected by me and assigned to the mental health team because of their expertise, background, or education in mental health. A sense of surprise came from some of the mental health practitioners who found it interesting and perhaps even a little "odd" that police officers, sergeants, and a lieutenant could also be mental health practitioners. Ironically, by placing the community affairs officers in charge of the coordination of services at the Family Assistance Center, the notion that police work is social work became more of a reality than any of us would have imagined.

The police mental health team would check in with each other about their fears, pain, acute stress symptoms, nightmares, frustration, grief, loss, and feelings of helplessness as it applied to the families. These cops worked twelve-hour days for ten weeks, with little or no time off. Some officers described dreaming of hundreds of people in their living rooms waiting to view hospital lists, spilling over into their bathrooms and hallways. Other officers cried as they shared their personal grief and loss relative to the incident. Still others talked about the effects of witnessing the horrific devastation of Ground Zero. These officers were at risk for vicarious trauma and therefore this daily morning debriefing in the "circle of trust," as it was named, was critical for their mental health.

The Red Cross volunteers were not allowed to work more than two weeks, and the city clinicians and social workers also rotated their services frequently. The police mental health team worked continuously and directly without a break for ten weeks, providing crisis intervention for thousands of families and individuals. A lot was asked of the police mental health team. They would take a minimum of two boat rides each day. They were heroes in the true sense of the word, helping families in their recovery.

Prior to each boat trip, I would brief the support team, reminding them to meet families where they were at, not to pathologize grief, to allow people the space and privacy they deserve, and cautioning them about the likelihood that they themselves may get caught up in the crisis of the site. Three times a day, before different members of the team each

time, my briefing reiterated how critical it was to keep in mind that the families had not invited us to the grave site of their loved one. All the providers had to remember that grief and mourning are private and to resist being intrusive. "If people cry, that's okay. It's part of the grieving process. Offer them a tissue." Despite the briefings, it was still necessary to remind members of the team to step away from the family and give them some breathing room during the visit. Those providers who were getting caught up in their own crisis because of the devastation were encouraged to move along and stay with the families. Time and again it was necessary to remind each other not to pathologize grief and that it was okay for families to react hysterically. Crisis is contagious.

Effective Communication and Intervention

What worked best was active listening, allowing long periods of silence, and empathetic body posture. Words of encouragement or suggestions were few and awkward. Many people looked to the officers of the mental health team for answers to heartbreaking questions: "When will they find her body?" "Will I be able to see her body at the morgue?" " If he had a tattoo on his arm, will that help to identify him?" Most of these questions had no answers, only compassionate responses with hypothetical conjecture.

In Native American spirituality, "dog medicine" is that of service and unconditional love. The pet therapy provided by groups like the Delta Society, Therapet, TDI, and the Good Dog Foundation, under the direction of Ms. Rachel McPhearson, provided one of the most effective forms of intervention at the center. Coordinated by Dr. Stephanie LeFarge from the ASPCA, the pet therapy dogs instinctually knew how to meet the families where they were emotionally. The dogs did not have an agenda and were never self-serving. They were never intrusive, never pathologized grief, and it was in their service, sincerity, non-pretentiousness, and unconditional love that an extraordinary miracle of healing power was brought to the lives of over 4,000 people and clearly made the difference in their recovery process.

Where language may have been an issue, the dog's presence communicated love, acceptance, and understanding. When a mental health practitioner's presence, although well meaning, hampered conversation, the dog's spirit, patiently waiting at the side of their owner/handler broke through the barrier of awkwardness for so many families.

An elderly Latino woman stricken with grief was with her family on one of the trips to Ground Zero and was inconsolable. Neither the officers from the mental health team, the Red Cross volunteers, or the spiritual care providers were able to make a connection with this woman, who chose to remain alone in her pain. On that trip was a pet therapy dog named "Fidel." He was a sweet, adorable, loving Papillion, one of the favorite and most effective dogs, and the only provider who was able to break through and make a connection. She held Fidel in her arms and cried and sobbed uncontrollably. Fidel took it all in, as was his duty to do so. Fidel had been instrumental in helping that woman's catharsis, a first step in her recovery. Fidel's gift was his selflessness, unconditional intervention, and non-intrusiveness. After the trip, the woman thanked Fidel, who exhaustedly fell into a deep sleep in the arms of his owner Rachel McPhearson.

As the dogs gave the gift of unconditional love, the people from Oklahoma City gave the gift of empathy and care that was unexplainable. The true expert and living proof for the families that they will survive this nightmare was a miraculous testimony over and over again. Before each trip, I would address the families and prepare them for what was about to take place and what they

were about to experience. I assured them that although it would be painful, "we would get through it together." The support team would then be introduced. The look on the faces of the people would dramatically change when the people from Oklahoma City, who, like them, also lost loved ones, were introduced. Families would gravitate toward them and sometimes no words were exchanged, similar to the service that the dogs provided.

Words were not necessary. Counseling techniques, crisis intervention strategies, and credentials were less than important. It was the recognition of the true expert and the non-intrusive service provided by people like Diane Leonard, who lost her husband in the Oklahoma City bombing, and Ken Thompson, who lost his mother, that made the difference to the families of this tragedy. They had "walked in their shoes," and this was what made the difference. I made a special request through the Red Cross to have the people from Oklahoma City be included as an ongoing and integral part of the support team. Ultimately breaking through a frustrating bureaucracy, fifteen people from Oklahoma City joined the support team for a ten-week period. At my request, Diane Leonard and some of the others returned for a memorial in November and were instrumental in helping to provide unique support for the thousands of people who attended that event. Many of the families made connections with the people from Oklahoma and maintained contact months after the memorial, offering support to each other.

Conclusion

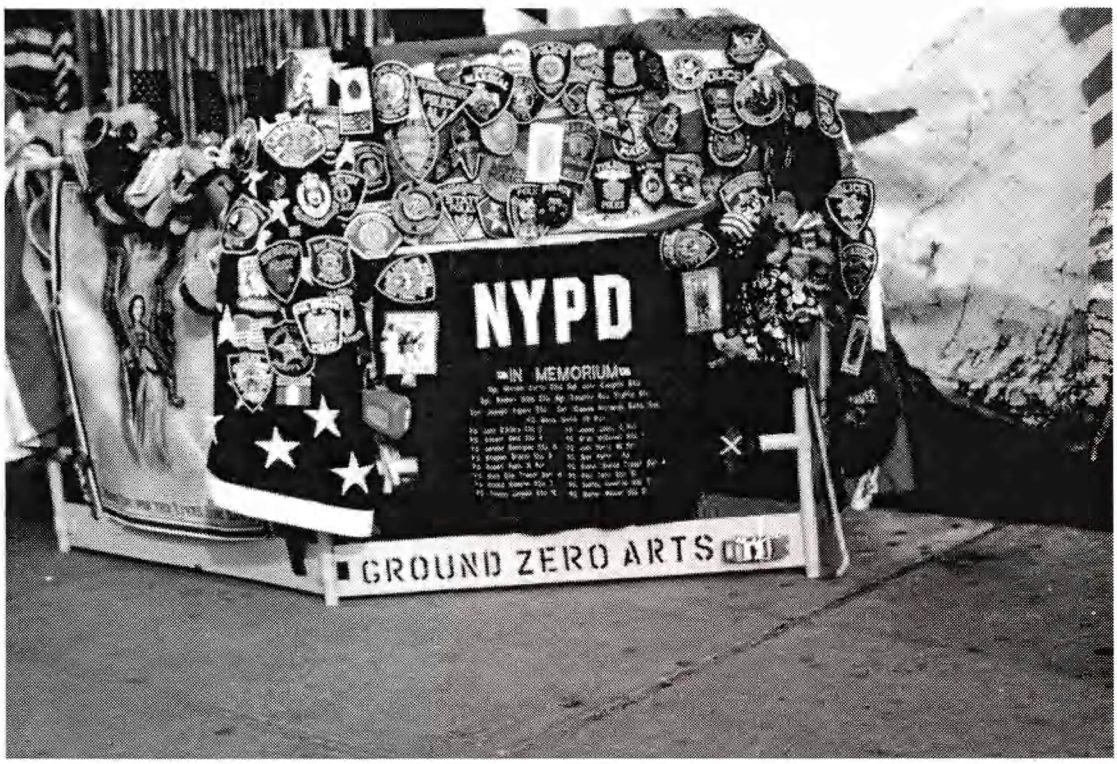
The families were not the only ones who had benefited from this work. The support team had received a tremendous, once-in-a-lifetime gift that would forever change them and make them better people, polishing their skills as mental health service providers. This experience is rich with lessons.

One of the lessons for us in the mental health field is to serve unconditionally, putting aside our own "agendas." Additionally, it is critical for us to recognize that sometimes the mental health "expert" may not be the professional with the credentials but rather the provider who has a less traditional background and a more lived experience, as in the case of the people from Oklahoma City. We can also learn from this experience that effective communication and intervention is sometimes more powerfully conveyed in silence. Animal beings can teach us how to serve unconditionally and non-intrusively in times of grief and that the most unexpected minister is not always dressed in cleric's garments.

My officers and I benefited greatly from this work and most of us describe our work at the morgue, the Armory, and Pier 94 as the greatest work of our careers. However, we are at serious risk for vicarious trauma despite preventative measures that were taken to moderate its effects. We were de-fused, de-briefed, and attended a daylong retreat and a stress management conference. However, at a recent "stress management reunion" conducted six months after September 11th, the risk for Post Traumatic Stress, depression, and vicarious trauma were evident. We had been vessels where thousands of people could deposit their grief and now we were full. Very few of us know how the "families" are currently doing. For most of us, our memory of them is of despair, grief, and crisis. As Ground Zero, currently a very different scene, remains open for viewing to all "ticket holders," some members of my team are still providing escorts there - and for them, it is perhaps only September 12th.

The police department, often under the fire of justified criticism, became overnight heroes after September 11th, a distinction often held by the fire department and somewhat unfamiliar territory for the police. All rescue workers were classified heroes because of their efforts. The unknown police heroes were those that worked with me

directly in the emotional and spiritual rescue and recovery of the families at Pier 94. They proved that police work is in fact social work and they made the difference in the lives of thousands. It was a privilege to work with them every day for ten weeks, and I know that the families are eternally grateful to them.



To Be of Use After September 11th: One Social Worker's Experience

By Jo Nol, Ph.D., Partner, Women's Center for Psychotherapy

These are the author's reflections from her experience providing crisis debriefing for a major financial company which had several thousand employees in the World Trade Center. This company recruited many mental health providers from outside the New York area.

Almost immediately after the September tragedy, I began searching for a way to feel less helpless. I imagine that was true of many social workers as well. Someone set up a television in the common office in our practice and between sessions we huddled around it feeling stunned and hoping for answers that wouldn't come. It felt surreal to just go on with our work while this catastrophe was unfolding. As the initial shock passed, the idea to find a way to contribute evolved naturally. For a social worker, part of the traumatic impact of such an atrocity is the inability to act and be of use. But the search over the week proved frustratingly futile. For the last ten years, I have developed a specialty in trauma and just like most people in this country, I wanted to help in the healing. My skills were perfectly suited for just this kind of work, yet I couldn't find a way to contribute.

On Sunday, September 17th by happenstance, I heard that an EAP, contracted by an unnamed company (for confidentiality purposes), was looking for mental health professionals to work with their employees who had been in the World Trade Towers. Hoping this would be my chance, after a flurry of phone calls I finally connected with someone in the know, only to find out they had already found their quota of people. By 5:30 pm that Sunday, I grew resigned to the fact that I would have to keep looking. I spent some time on the phone commiserating with a colleague about our thwarted desire to be of service. And then, at just before 8:55 pm, I got one more call from another colleague, already en route to New York, telling me that they needed me. I was elated. On Sunday, September 17th, after calling my private clients to cancel their appointments for the week, I quickly packed a bag and bid my partner adieu. By 10:00 pm I was headed for New York City to offer my services as a crisis debriefer.

I joined a team of eight other women, some of whom were clinical social workers, and others from various professions who had experience in crisis debriefing work. Two members of this group were colleagues in the private practice where I worked. We nine were folded in with others recruited by the in-house EAP and the health care insurance company and began our work for a major financial institution that had had several thousand employees in World Trade Tower Two. Before the attack, these employees had been in the business of making money for their customers from the world financial markets. After the attack, everything was up for grabs.

Initially, I wasn't clear who had actually hired us. It turned out that the contact woman, who was the team leader for our little unit from Connecticut, had been a provider for the insurance company that also had a contract with the corporation in New York. After the events of September 11th, the insurance company had been unable to provide enough mental health workers from the New York area alone to address the overwhelming needs of the employees in this investment company.

So they had reached across the state border to someone who had experience and training in crisis debriefing. She, in turn, searched in her own area to come up with a team of people willing and ready to set out for the city. I was relieved and pleased to have been one of them.

We worked for five days from 8 am to around 6 pm at different locations in mid and lower Manhattan. In the evenings, some of us would gather for our own debriefings, feeling emotionally drained and hungry to process what we'd been through. Often, in the evenings, we would walk around the city just to be active and to find something other than the intensity with which we were dealing all day. Repeatedly hearing variations of the same traumatic experience began to feel traumatizing to us as well. I am so grateful for my colleagues who shared this gratifying, yet emotionally exhausting, experience with me. There was much to take in. Some of this was reminiscent of my early days in crisis intervention during the 1970s when I worked at the local crisis center. However, some aspects were totally unfamiliar, even alien, as I was interacting with people who moved comfortably in corporate America.

In an environment of hushed voices, polished wooden furniture, and what seemed like acres of half-walled cubicles separating workers and their desks and computers, I delved quickly into people's private agonies. At times I felt as if I had walked into a system of interconnected parts all working in unison toward a single product or output. The emphasis was on making money for themselves and their clients. The discussions were about markets and trends. Under fluorescent lights, computer screens flickered with graphs and charts while people stared earnestly ahead or spoke softly into telephone headsets. Despite all outward appearances of business as usual, I sensed a pervasive tension wherever I went.

For the first three days, I was assigned to different sites where employees who had fled the tower had been temporarily relocated to try to reengage in their work. We scurried among the skyscrapers and yo-yoed up and down elevators, landing in expansive office suites that were distributed around midtown. The company issued daily memos telling each department where they were assigned for debriefing. We debriefers were sent in twos or threes to conference rooms or lunchrooms to meet with groups of people who had had their worlds leveled. Sometimes I met with people individually when they requested it. I was surprised, probably from my misconceptions about the kind of people who worked in the financial sector, by how willing each group was to share their stories. I had mistakenly expected that they would somehow be different in how strongly they held on to their reserve. However, of course, they expressed the normal array of ways people have of protecting themselves from such an emotional and psychological assault. There were those who sat stiffly, stoically refusing to acknowledge that racing down seventy-odd flights of stairs, in a shuddering and sometimes swaying building, had any effect on them. One young man had been in a building next to the towers and had watched people running out. His wife had barely escaped from the 68th floor. He had decided that he had no right to be affected by it all because he "hadn't even been in the towers like these other people." I watched him valiantly feign being untouched by anything. His building had also been destroyed by the calamity, but because he had not had to race down stairs, he believed he didn't deserve to be put into the same category with his coworkers. Others trembled and unsuccessfully fought back the tears. Many talked spontaneously about what had propelled them on at the moment they had realized that they might die. Several people recalled conjuring up the faces of their children, imagining what would happen to them if they were left fatherless or motherless. Men who probably hadn't cried in most of their adult lives dissolved into tears at the

thought of how close they had come to never seeing their families again.

Although their names have faded in my memory, I can still summon up their faces, sometimes contorted with anger or grief, sometimes expressionless with shock and numbness. Often when someone was talking, others were nodding or weeping quietly. People described the panic at having lost track of friends in the scramble to the bottom and the frantic search for each other at the other end of the run. Some had been in the promenade under the towers, buying their coffee and breakfast and feeling guilty about not having had to make the journey down the stairs. Because their offices had been so high up in the tower, descending normally meant taking two different elevators. Two middle-aged women talked about their momentary confusion when they couldn't call the initial elevator and the gradual dawning of the fact that they had to climb down seventy flights of stairs. Many people, some rubbing their calves or thighs, mentioned that their legs still ached from the climb down. Some spoke of their relief, before beginning the descent, at finally reaching a partner or a child by cell phone while others remembered how frustrating it had been to be unable to get through to the person they wanted to reassure. At the end of the sessions, somebody might approach us to offer an embrace of thanks, while others would nod or just smile weakly as they left the room. I felt viscerally touched by each person's story.

The company needed to get back to business as soon as possible since this was its reason for being and failure to do so would mean its demise. However, people can't shift so easily from trauma to normal functioning. Employees talked about struggling to concentrate on their work and about co-workers who were afraid to even come to work. Some of the debriefers spent time on the phones with employees who had retreated into what they thought was the safety of their own homes. How ironic, that so many of us had been going about our lives, taking for granted the illusion of safety our country projected. Who among us, especially those in the middle class, would have thought we could be in such danger in our very own work places?

My mission was to be available, to offer myself as a witness and a tool for the survivors in order to prevent the longer-term symptoms of more serious problems. I wondered whether this was to be the case. I was uneasy about the corporate context and how free people actually felt to participate or not. We would tell people that we didn't want to know their last names, that we didn't report to anyone on the content of our discussions, and that we weren't taking any notes. Still, it wasn't completely clear whom we were serving. It went without saying: the company needed a healthy productive workforce as soon as possible. It seemed as if we had been imported to descend on their employees with the purpose of stitching them back together like battlefield MASH units. The dilemma for the workers was that if they didn't pull it together fast enough, they could be out of their jobs.

Some managers were genuinely concerned about their people, and others, we were told by the Human Resources (HR) people, didn't have any use for the service. This led to a feeling in some employees that to seek help negatively labeled them. I heard this in whispered tones from a few people, and was told this was the case by several HR contact people. Many people felt torn between wanting to immerse themselves in the experience and needing to get back to the tasks of daily living.

The staff seemed dedicated to their people, frequently expressing concern for a particular person or department. Because of the enormity of the task, they often looked as bewildered and overwhelmed as the workers did. Sometimes I found myself providing support for them as well. One middle-aged

HR manager sporting a blond French twist and long red nails, which she worried about as we stood talking, could hardly bring herself to acknowledge her exhaustion. The corporate norms could not have anticipated such a blow to the entire worker population. How could she be allowed support for herself when so many of her people hadn't made it or had so nearly escaped death? Her quandary about seeking her own support meant that her story trickled out as we stood in the hallway awaiting the next group of employees or while we sampled the ubiquitous buffets set up by the company.

Just as there is a hierarchy in any corporation, one developed pretty quickly among the debriefers. We were often crowded together into rooms waiting for our daily assignments by the head of the EAP company who had little sense of how to organize such an operation, and who seemed overwhelmed by the task. She would nervously flip the pages of her notebook back and forth while trying to figure out how to disperse us to our assignments. She often couldn't seem to make up her mind about who should go where and when. At times I felt impatient with the resultant chaos that left us wasting precious time. I was eager to be engaged in the work.

There were social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and people with other master's level human services degrees, as well as a few non-professionals trained in quick-fix interventions thrown into the mix. We came from Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and California. I noticed that the psychologists and psychiatrists were assigned to provide debriefing to management groups, while the rest of us were given the workers. Many of the overheard conversations among the debriefers seemed to be about establishing and maintaining the hierarchy among the professions and between those who had done debriefing before and those of us who were first timers. I am not proud of the fact that at times in my life I have made sure that those around me understood how many credentials I have. Soon after, I tend to feel chagrin at my own shallowness and insecurity. That week, I felt inundated by images of strength, courage, terror, and pettiness. I wrestled with my own ungenerous thoughts about this temporary group of colleagues. But I was astonished by the amount and level of verbal jousting that went on to establish who had the most authority, experience, connections, training, and expertise. It seemed unusually pronounced, and I wondered if it was somehow exacerbated by the circumstances. There we were, thrust together to work with so many people who had confronted imminent death and who were now expected to resolve it and get quickly back to the business at hand. Perhaps familiar structures and routines, even the old pecking orders, were felt to be reassuring given the trauma we were all experiencing and continuing to undergo. Maybe because of the depth and breadth of the trauma, many of us felt a need to tell ourselves that we knew what we were doing and were up to the challenge these courageous people presented to us.

Other distinctions quickly emerged. Some helpers were trained in a specific time-limited, crisis-debriefing format, used by the Red Cross and others, which was designed for medical emergencies, accidents, or natural disasters. These people seemed unprepared for and surprised to be dealing with many of the issues with which the employees were struggling. The result was that sometimes the most profound expressions of grief were met with platitudes or efforts to minimize it. One man talked about the guilt over his inability to convince a coworker to run with him. This person had died, so in addition to grieving this loss, the man wondered how he could live with himself as a manager of people after his perceived failure. A helper leaned over to hug him. To his credit, this middle-aged white man turned to her, his eyes brimming with tears, and quietly said, "A hug isn't going to

cut it." Other times, there was no attention paid to people's feelings at all. Instead, a group might consist of an expertly structured and orchestrated presentation made by the "helpers," but without much input from the employees (clients). It also seemed that the company managers were given pep talks and information about the impact of stress, while the workers were sometimes acknowledged to have a need for expressing their emotional reactions. I wondered if this reflected people's fears of the depth of feelings that might be unleashed should there be room made for them. Or was there a basic need for someone to be seen as in charge? The idea that no one was exempt from this assault might have been too much to absorb. Could this be a micro expression of the entire country's reaction to having the chimera of complete security shattered?

Entering this world of crisis debriefing was certainly a learning experience for me. I was introduced to several versions of a specific crisis intervention model. Some were highly structured formats that didn't seem to allow for the variations in the ways people were trying to manage. Once, I was teamed up with a person who had been trained in one of these protocols but who had no professional experience outside of this method. I watched her engage in what looked to me like a dance designed to keep people's reactions neatly packaged into manageable bites. We stumbled over each other in how we responded to people, and when I tried to attend to some of the group process she offered some well-meaning but non sequitur advice which had the effect of leaving the group sitting in nervous silence. At one point, she shared a story about a family crisis she'd been able to overcome as a way of offering comfort and inspiration. However, this was in response to a woman who was talking about seeing bodies falling from above as she stood at the window of her office. I started worrying about what my co-leader might say or do next, not something I should have needed to focus on at that time. I subsequently requested that I be teamed up with someone whose work I knew. I had the impression that for many of the employees, this was their introduction to any kind of helping process. I worried what they would take away from this experience, particularly if they might need or want help later.

This company had been in the towers at the time of the first bombing in 1993 and thereafter had set up an emergency backup location in lower Manhattan to minimize future disruptions in work. This site represented the company's efforts to be prepared while not really appreciating how disruptive these events would be to the workforce.

On the fourth morning, two of us were sent to this site. After making a couple of wrong turns, including taking an unexpected tour of Chinatown, we arrived at a warehouse that had been set up and now accommodated hundreds of workers and their computers. It was hot. Fans blew the thick, heated air around the cavernous room as workers tried to concentrate on their screens or engaged in conferences with one another. Cardboard signs hung from the ceiling to delineate one department or unit from another. Rivers of people flowed between the lines of tables, and the hum of electronic equipment mixed with the buzz of many conversations. Bundles of wires taped to the floor ran along narrow corridors stacked with crates and boxes of supplies. Everything looked temporary as if hastily thrown up. The setting seemed to express the angst of the company.

In an apparent effort to take care of the employees, the company had set up an assembly line food area where packaged sandwiches and salads were served, and coolers full of bottles of water or soda were available all of the time. Employees I talked to seemed to understand the company's intent, which may have added to the struggle many of them had. The assumption appeared to be that the

suffering should be circumscribed and that it was possible for people to be debriefed and then go right back to work.

By that time in the week, the shock and terror had transformed in some to anger at the company for its lack of sensitivity. In the privacy of a group debriefing, I heard five men vent their anger at the callousness of a company that they felt was pushing them to return to work before they were ready. I thought I was also hearing echoes of the fear and disappointment over a surrogate parent's inability to protect them from the dangers in the world. These men fumed about a coworker who was being honored for his heroism. They maintained that this man had harangued them to get back to work as the other tower burned while he had stayed until the last possible moment before fleeing as well. The years of resentment against this man for being a loudmouth and a braggart boiled over when they watched him maneuver himself into receiving recognition instead of being held accountable for lives he had risked by towing the company line.

As we helpers sat and waited, we wondered what was happening in the upper reaches of the company that depended on productive workers to keep going. The economy was taking a dive, and it wasn't a stretch to imagine they were also in turmoil. There seemed to be an urgency to get people through the shock as quickly as possible so that things could get back to normal. This tension was reflected in how the company was trying to support its workers by providing them with food, busing them to the memorial services held in St. Patrick's Cathedral, and walking tearful employees over to where we debriefers were stationed. At the same time, we heard from employees that individual managers were barking at their workers to get back into the swing of things. Rumors flew about cut backs and layoffs. It was the proverbial Catch-22.

In the middle of the first day at this site, I noticed that I had already become accustomed to those strange warehouse-like surroundings. We had been given a lunchroom and three offices at the end of a room the length of a football field in which to conduct our sessions. Signs informing workers about our services and location were posted everywhere. We sat under banners indicating our function. Over the course of the day, managers would approach us to arrange sessions for their work units. Often a weeping worker would arrive on the arm of a coworker and one of us would link up with the employee and guide her or him into an office. I sat with people whom I probably would never have met under less unusual circumstances. It is likely that they would not have sought therapy or help from mental health providers, and I tend not to associate with people from corporate America. There were people whose values were very different from my own, and yet the enormity of what they and we had gone through drew us instantly into a rapport. Most people seemed compelled to impart their stories to me. They talked about being determined to live, about carrying others down seventy-plus stories, about praying quietly as the building swayed around them. Some remembered how calm everyone seemed as thousands of people trod down narrow, windowless stairways that allowed only two abreast. Even when the column of people came periodically to a stop, many remained supportive and soothing with each other and successfully avoided the panic that could have occurred. One man told me about following a woman who became paralyzed with fear and stood rooted to the spot. She held a steely grip on both handrails blocking the entire line of people behind her. Despite the growing tension in the stairwell, he and another man had spoken gently to her while they worked to peel her hands from the railing. Finally she had agreed to release her hold when they told her they would carry her the next fifty stories to the bottom, which they

did. Several commented on noticing how some served as coaches, urging people on and invoking hope for all. People talked about seeing women's shoes in heaps, hastily flung off because they impeded the race for life. One woman held up her sensibly shod feet and stated emphatically that she would never wear heels again. Others wept over lost friends with a sense of guilt over having been unable to save them. People told of their resolve to leave at the sight of the first tower being hit, in spite of announcements over the Public Address system that all was secure and that everyone should return to their desks. One person described seeing the flames and smoke spew out of the other tower while standing at the window. A few people spoke of how the sight of body parts and people falling by their windows kept them fixed to their spots while others fled toward the stairs. From most people, I heard of someone who hadn't made it or someone who now refused to come to work. One young man quietly sat down and without saying a word carefully unfolded a piece of paper on the table. He told me that it was a list of all of the friends he had lost in the other tower. There were eleven names.

This major financial company had accomplished what many non-profits are still struggling to do—have a truly multi-cultural workforce, at least at the lower levels of the hierarchy. Most groups I worked with were made up of people who are considered members of minorities or immigrants. As a White woman, I was often in the minority. This added to the richness of the experience, since I have a typical private practice caseload of mostly White women, with only a smattering of men and minorities. Most of the people I met told me that they had never asked for or considered using professional help.

One older African-American woman came to our area with a friend and coworker. She talked about how they had supported each other to come to see us, neither of them ever having talked to a professional helper before. She and I sat in a small office crowded with boxes and worn furniture and she told me her story. It was similar to others' in some respects but, of course, also unique to her. She rarely looked directly at me, instead staring out the window or looking down at her hands and occasionally stealing a glance my way. Now and then as she talked, she apologized for taking up my time. She couldn't understand why she was having such trouble focusing on her work or why she couldn't sleep. She was jumpy and on edge, and scenes from that day kept intruding into her thoughts. She worried that she wouldn't be able to get back to normal.

She was a mother, a grandmother, and an aunt to relatives and kids in need, and her role had always been the family matriarch. To feel so undone and close to out of control was not something she had dealt with or could abide. It was indeed an unusual coming together. She was ten years my senior and originally came from the south. I am a northern European transplanted to the United States and strongly ensconced in my progressive, anti big-business, childless, middle-class life. As a single mother, the corporation was the medium to a financially secure life for her and her extended family. She was a devotedly church-going woman, while the legacy of my socialist, atheist roots lives on in my choices. Her troubles had made her open to me in a way that under most circumstances might not have happened or, perhaps, would have unfolded much more slowly. The attack on her place of work and my need to be of use brought us together.

At first she spoke haltingly, carefully, but as we went, her words came more easily. She told me, somewhat wryly, that after the first building had been hit she had gone back to her desk, closed up her computer, put away papers and files and gone to the bathroom to comb her hair and wash her hands. Then she had stopped by her friend's desk and the two

of them had calmly walked to the staircase. And as is often the case, the telling of her story was therapeutic. She had not told anyone most of it out of worry that she might burden the people she cared about. I teared up at aspects of her tale, although she didn't seem to notice. I watched her gradually relax. She talked about feeling better, and by the end we were even able to laugh. I hope I helped in listening as well as in giving her information about her natural reactions to this life-threatening event.

Not surprisingly, people sought solace in their religious beliefs. One African-American woman had obviously been sent into a religious crisis by her ordeal. In addition to having to run for her own life, someone she loved had been killed in Tower One. She talked with bitterness about how her loss had led her to feel murderous toward the perpetrators in direct contradiction to her religious beliefs. Two women of Hispanic descent talked about their jobs representing their having attained a success never before achieved in their families, and both wondered at what price. They had both sought answers from their priest, but found what they received unsatisfying and incomplete. An orthodox Jewish man described how his faith sustained him in this moment of crisis. I spoke with Eastern European immigrants who told me in heavy accents about their journeys to the U.S. with dreams for better lives sustaining them. One Russian woman, still in shock, talked about having left behind her fears of death when she came to the U.S., only to have to resurrect them. She spoke of her need for something more than the money to give her a reason to stay. It will be interesting to see the extent to which this event causes people to reevaluate or reorder their lives.

We had all been traveling along in our lives, taking for granted that each day would lead to the next without too much variation and according to our expectations. Suddenly each of these people had been confronted with the possible end of life. One manager had suggested that because this company hired the type of person who was headstrong and independent thinking, this helped explain why so many had made it out. Despite orders from some managers to stay at their desks, and announcements over the address system that there was nothing to worry about, most of the employees of this company ignored those messages and orders and fled. Whatever the reasons, most of them had survived. That such a thing can happen to perhaps both ordinary and not so ordinary people, and that I was given a chance to experience it through the eyes of those who lived, gave me a push toward my own change.

Several people with whom I interacted had experienced the 1993 bombing. Many were reflecting on the existential dilemmas created by the attacks, particularly on how to proceed with the rest of their lives. Some teetered on the brink of deciding to make major changes, to quit, to move out of the area, to pursue deferred life dreams. Such reactions made sense to me at that point. After each encounter, I felt sad at not being able to see how a story would play out, but my brief encounters with them inspired me to consider changes in my own life.

My career began about thirty years ago in crisis intervention, and since then I have been listening to people share their stories in one context or another. However, the convergence of context and content in this particular experience left a unique impression. Before September 11th, I had been worrying about a particular decision without resolution. I have long wanted to visit Antarctica, but I mustered numerous arguments against it. I suspect that beneath the pile of reasons for my not going was plain old fear about taking on something so adventurous, as well as my typical belief about my lack of deservedness. My week in New York gave me the resolve that I needed to make my plans and go. Being with so many people, ordinary people,

who showed such courage when called on to face such an extraordinary event and who had shared their stories allowed a shift to happen in me. Three months later while in Antarctica, immersed in the natural wonders at the bottom of the world, for a moment some of those faces from September came back to me. Those faces reminded me of what had happened, what could happen, and how we are all linked in the sometimes fragile web of life on this small globe.

Ground Zero, May, 2002:
A view from the street, (right) and a view from the platform (below).

THE LONGEST DAY

By Andrew Malekoff, MSW, Associate Director, North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center

In this narrative, one of our guest editors reflects on the ways in which he and other volunteers attempted to help families of the World Trade Center victims find closure. These volunteers learned that an important part of the healing process is to take actions that represent triumph over feelings of helplessness.

"And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd...and this also has [become] one of the dark places of the earth."

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

A chill returned as the sun disappeared behind the ruins of the World Trade Center. Renee Fleming, accompanied by the orchestra of St. Luke's, sang "God Bless America." I waved to a police officer wearing a light blue windbreaker. The words NYPD COMMUNITY AFFAIRS were printed in white block letters on the back of her jacket. She waved back and smiled. I headed for the emergency lane on my way to the boat that would be returning the mental health workers to Pier 94 on 57th Street.

Moments earlier I said goodbye to the family I had stood beside during the memorial service. They sat in the back row of our section, one of scores of sections filled with thousands of folding chairs, each chair occupied by a grieving family member. I stood with my back against an iron gate so I wouldn't block anyone's view. The family lost their father and husband, a decorated firefighter. The widow was a slight woman of Italian descent, probably in her sixties, although it was hard to guess her age because of the years added by September 11th.

Her husband's photo was pinned to her wool coat and to the coats of her three children. He was handsome. He had a white mustache and full head of silvery hair, combed straight back. When the memorial service started an hour earlier, one of her sons, an off-duty police officer, asked me to please make sure that no one obstructed his mother's view. He said, "You can see how short she is, less than five feet."

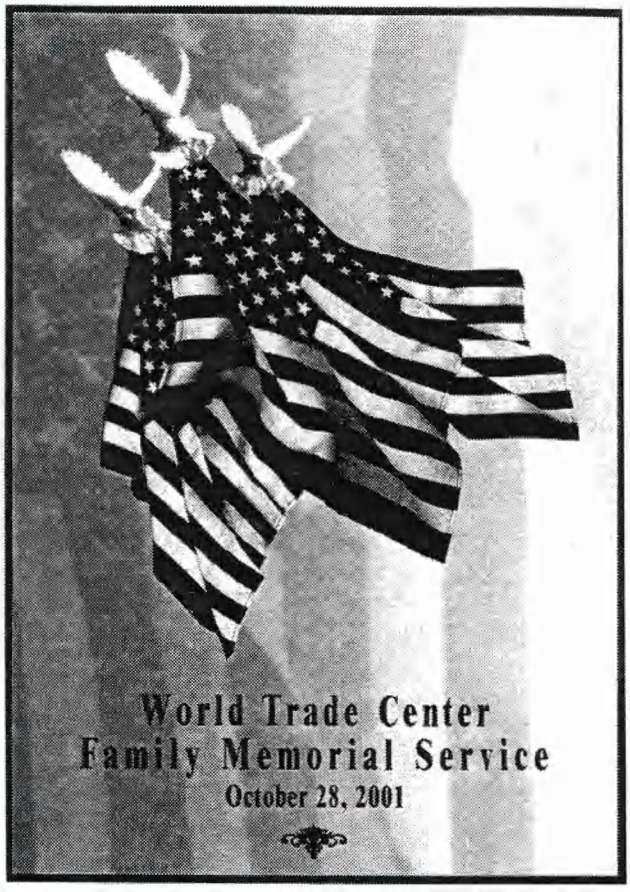
World Trade Center Memorial Service: October 28, 2001

The service began with a processional that included His Eminence Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York. Then, singing the "Star Spangled Banner," was police officer Daniel Rodriguez of the NYPD. He had become a presence across the nation in recent weeks, appearing in his dress blues and singing the national anthem at Yankee Stadium.

Everyone was on his or her feet. A massive wall of mourners rose around the tiny figure to my right. When I saw her struggling to climb, I took her arm and helped her up onto the folding chair. I told her that she could grab on to me. "Hold on to my shoulders," I said. She hesitated. "Don't worry you won't knock me over," I told her.

I could feel her trembling as she removed her right hand from my shoulder and fumbled for a tissue inside her coat pocket. I reached into my pants pocket and handed her a hand-

kerchief. When I was picking out my clothes earlier in the morning I came across several unopened packets of white handkerchiefs. They belonged to my father who died seven years earlier. As I got dressed I thought that today my father would want somebody who needed it to have one of his handkerchiefs. At first she refused my offer, not wanting to impose. I urged her, "Please, take it. It's okay."



A program from the Memorial Service

As I stepped away from this family to exit the memorial service, my eyes were drawn to an attractive young woman with blonde hair wearing dark sunglasses. She held a framed 8 by 10 inch photo portrait of her husband. I can still see his face clearly. Earlier, a colleague of mine talked to the woman with the photo. She leaned over and whispered to her, "You know when I look at him I feel like smiling." And the woman holding the photo of her husband smiled weakly and said, "That's the kind of guy he was, he made everyone smile."

After a few more goodbyes, I continued down the emergency lane. The organizer told us earlier that "God Bless America" was our cue to leave the site and head for the boat. I walked along a narrow path sandwiched between 15,000 mourners of every shade and age. Some were singing, some crying, and some holding up photos of lost loved ones. Passing me in the opposite direction was a woman who was hooked up to a respirator. Emergency personnel wheeled her away on a stretcher, while a companion walked alongside wearing a surgical mask.

Many mourners wore surgical masks. The odor of the smoldering ruins was strong and distinctive. After three hours, I could feel something accumulating inside my throat. My imagination jumped ahead ten years. I wondered about the health risk to those who have been exposed daily to the toxins rising from Ground Zero. I thought about a photojournalist that I met who barely escaped the attack. He referred to his assignment that day as "a field trip into hell." Maybe this is what hell smells like, I thought.

The Tyranny of Imagination

After walking several blocks to the Hudson River, we boarded a boat and headed back to the Pier. It would be about a thirty-minute ride. As we drifted away from Ground Zero, I tried to wrap my mind around what I just came from. The idea of 15,000 mourners at a gravesite for thousands of murder victims in a location less than an hour from my home was hard to absorb.

I thought about the dozens of people I met in recent weeks who escaped and their surreal descriptions of the morning of 9/11, images and sensations that will never leave them: the odor of jet fuel; sweat-drenched firefighters in full gear climbing up stairs and

urging everyone else to head down; women bursting from the buildings carrying shoes in hand in order to run faster; people jumping to their deaths rather than being burned alive; and frantic figures scattering from the site holding food trays overhead to avoid the blizzard of debris, running as fast as their legs would carry them past stretch limousines with assorted airplane parts jutting from the hoods.

One woman, an Empire BlueCross BlueShield employee, told me that when she exited the building the first thing she did was look up. Almost immediately she saw the second plane crash into tower two. She said that before she could run to safety she had to find another witness to confirm what she saw. "I thought I was going crazy, hallucinating," she said. The horrifying images of those who escaped are rivaled only by the tyranny of imagination that now plagues the bereaved.

Weeks before the memorial service we had been receiving calls at the agency from businesses, local government, the New York City Fire Department, and local schools and community groups.

We also received direct calls from people who escaped and families who lost loved ones. One call was from a parent whose eleven-year-old son Danny refused to eat. His father was missing. Through Danny's story, I learned about the tyranny of imagination. Danny imagined his father to be alive in his office in the World Trade Center and trapped, alone and starving. If his father couldn't eat, Danny reasoned, then he wouldn't eat.

A Community Agency Responds

As the leading community-based children's mental health center on Long Island, we anticipated an avalanche of calls from individuals and institutions. We knew that how we organized our efforts would be critical. We also knew that there is no blueprint for the unprecedented.

How did we respond? On September 11th, several top staff gathered to make a plan. First, all staff members directly affected by the attack were encouraged to do whatever they needed to do for themselves and their families. Second, staff members were directed to contact all agency clients to check in and make themselves available as needed. We knew about the potential effects of the disaster on persons with less exposure but who had significant risk factors such as prior unresolved trauma or loss. Third, the agency would extend its hours and days of operation. Fourth, we would make a list of staff willing to make themselves available for special assignments including responding to individual and family crises, providing consultations to schools, leading groups for surviving family members of deceased firefighters, and offering support to displaced employees who escaped and lost colleagues. This was how we started. Soon thereafter we addressed how to meet the ongoing needs of our own staff, soon to be steeped in the recovery effort.

Preparing for the Unprecedented

Within 24 hours of the terrorist attack there was a request from an employee assistance program. Professionals were needed to meet with court personnel in New York City. I was one of two who volunteered. The "debriefing," as the EAP director called it, was to take place all day on Friday, September 14th. There were no further details or instructions.

I took down travel information, identified a contact person, and wondered what I would do when I got there. I figured that I would draw on my clinical, group work, and crisis intervention experience. Intuitively, I started reaching for frames of reference.

One of my assignments fifteen years ago was to meet with a group called Parents of Murdered Children (POMC). The lay leaders for the group, a bereaved husband and wife who lost their son, called the county executive's office and said that the group was

"stuck" and needed some assistance. I learned from that experience that trying to act smart was a big mistake. A colleague from another agency took a prescriptive stance, while I sat quietly. Being there, listening, and bearing witness was where it was at. In time I was accepted, enabling me to help the group to identify their need to do more than repeatedly tell their stories.

They expressed a need to take social action. I learned from them about secondary victimization at the hands of various bureaucracies. In time, they moved their meeting place to the agency to accommodate their growing membership. They became effective advocates, influencing legislation and treatment of crime victims and their families. My experience with POMC also taught me about the value of moving from support to social action.

I remembered another group, a group of kids I once worked with from changing families. One prospective group member witnessed the murder of his mother at the hands of his father. Some of my colleagues didn't think he should join the group. They reasoned that he would vicariously traumatize everyone else. In other words, he would freak out the other kids. I insisted that he be included. He did well in the group, spoke as freely as he chose to, and was readily accepted by the others. I learned from that experience to always err on the side of inclusiveness.

I remembered my part-time job as a crisis worker. The beeper would go off and soon I was in the emergency room or police station with little time to prepare. I learned from that experience that by assuming a stance of uncertainty and cultivating a part of my mind reserved for the unknown, I could cut myself some slack and learn from the inside out. After all, no one is an expert at another's experience. Inside out, that's the way to go.

How does one prepare for the unprecedented? Listening and bearing witness, offering groups to reduce isolation and foster social connection, and learning from the inside out. It was a start. After all, social workers always talk about learning by doing. This was as good a time as any to do just that. I had to rely on what I already knew and, most of all, be flexible. It was also important for me to say to myself, "I'm not in this alone." Many would be spending time with individuals, families, and groups who were struggling with the aftershock of 9/11. We struggle ourselves. Emotionally no one has been spared.

Zero Degrees of Separation

So, three days after the attack I went to the Supreme Court to meet with court personnel. I met with three groups for about one-and-a-half hours each. Participation was voluntary.

The groups included individuals with missing relatives or friends, individuals with relatives or friends confirmed dead, individuals who were in the World Trade Center complex during the attack, individuals with family members who barely escaped, individuals who witnessed the attack and collapse of the Twin Towers from courthouse windows, and others who heard about it, like many of us, on television, radio, or through word of mouth. All were deeply affected. Most were in a state of disbelief. Following are my reflections on the day.

When I first arrived, court officers confiscated my pocketknife. I learned that this is a new policy at the courthouse. Prior to the World Trade Center attack, any blade less than four inches was okay.

I met with my contact person, gathered some information, and quickly suggested how to organize groups. Knowing something about planning groups was invaluable. There were three groups of 8 to 12 people. We met in a vacant courtroom where I had arranged chairs around two long adjacent prosecution and defense tables. I asked that there be no observers.

While I was waiting for my first group a

court officer stopped by and told me, "Today should be interesting." When I asked him what he meant. He said, "It's foreclosure Friday." He explained that every Friday there is an auction of foreclosed property and, typically, about two hundred Arab-Americans participate. This seemed to signal growing unease with people of Middle Eastern descent.

Although there were many differences among the participants, there was common ground in their struggle to cope. Many signs and symptoms of trauma and stress were reported. These included numbness, shock, headaches, loss of appetite, aches and pains, frequent trips to the bathroom, sleeplessness, flashbacks, disbelief, startle response to loud noises and especially airplanes, helplessness, gruesome nightmares, anger, uncertainty, guilt, and fear.

Fear was a powerful theme. Many felt that the courthouse was unsafe. During one group meeting, a female court officer came in to search for explosives. We later learned that a bomb threat had been called in. She looked under chairs and desks and behind the elevated area where the judge sits. She never said a word. She just searched. Several group members nodded in agreement with one who said, "I feel like we are a target in this courthouse."

Many group members reported having difficulty regulating and expressing emotions. In every group at least one or two people wept openly, women and men. In every group at least one person bolted from the room and then came back. More than one person said, "I can't stop crying." And more than one said, "I can't cry." More than a few were angry.

There was anger at the government. "How could they let this happen?" they wondered. There was strong sentiment among a few to strike back. There were some not-so-veiled signs of bias towards people of Middle Eastern descent.

Many shared feelings of disbelief, saying how surreal it all seems. One group member said, "I am in a semi-daze; I feel like I am not even here."

Guilt was a powerful theme, especially guilt about going on with mundane day-to-day activities. This was balanced by the belief that showing strength and not giving in to terrorism was necessary. A court officer said he felt insignificant, like "a grain of sand." He said he felt helpless and wondered if he was going crazy.

A group member who lamented, "Aren't our children entitled to the life we enjoyed," best expressed the loss of innocence.

Someone's son escaped from the 78th floor. He took the stairs. His coworkers waited for the elevator. They didn't survive. His mother through sobs retold the son's story. When he emerged from the building, she told us, he witnessed flaming bodies falling from the sky. Two colleagues held her hands as she told the story.

In each group, members reached out to comfort one another through physical contact and understanding words. In one group a woman who said she couldn't understand why she hadn't cried was brought to tears by another's pain over a missing sister.

Despite the pain, all three groups welcomed humor. A court officer who loves to dance said he'd never dance again. Later, when the group was discussing ways to cope with stress, it was recommended that he teach the group how to dance. The image brought laughter and momentary relief from tension.

In closing, participants said, "It was good to vent," "It's good to get it out," "It's good to know you're not alone," and "It's good to know you're not crazy."

I was struck by the difference between what I was first told about these people and the reality. I had been advised that not too many people were personally affected. I discovered that everyone was profoundly affected. The experience generated empathic connections, fostered mutual support, re-

duced isolation, and normalized people's responses and reactions to a surreal situation.

I remain deeply moved by the intensity of the experience and the participants' ability to reach out to one another. It confirmed for me what I was already feeling. All of our lives are changed forever and to move forward we need each other. I knew that experiences like this, in groups, would be important for people in other settings and workplaces. And so I discovered a new frame of reference for the work ahead.

I discovered from this experience that the culture of people's associations in the workplace and other settings had to accommodate to the disaster. I felt that in order for September 11th not to cause alienation, people needed permission and support to tell their stories and share ongoing difficulties and concerns. This would foster social connection, reduce alienation, and help people to cope with their reactions to the terrorist attack and anxiety associated with war in Afghanistan and domestic threats such as bioterrorism. My experience in the courthouse helped me to understand in a deeper way that trauma isolates and atrophies otherwise healthy relationships, preventing them from growing.

Taking Care of Ourselves

The leadership of the agency created various opportunities for the staff and board of directors to tell their stories and share concerns. It required thinking "out of the box." At the October board meeting, at which the traditional yearly strategic planning agenda was abandoned, board members and administrative staff debriefed and defused. After the meeting, a past president of the agency described the experience as a "defining moment for the organization." It galvanized the board's commitment at a critical time, stimulated a course of action for supporting the development of our trauma and bereavement services, and strengthened the bond between board and staff.

Debriefing and defusing is only the beginning. We are learning from one another that the lessons we will offer to the traumatized for coping with the disaster also apply to us. In time we would learn about "vicarious PTSD" and "compassion fatigue" and "secondary traumatic stress disorder," fancy terms for our own vulnerability from too much caring and too little self-caring. Eating well, exercising, going easy on caffeine, getting sufficient rest, and...well, everything we advise to others now applies to us. We're really all in this one together.

Parade of Grief

On the boat ride back to the pier, it was more comforting thinking about the pride of being associated with a committed organization and dedicated colleagues than being tormented by what brought me there in the first place.

As the pier came into view, I knew that many families would soon be arriving to collect urns with ashes from Ground Zero. Each family would also be given an American flag. If the deceased were Veterans, families would receive a special plaque acknowledging their service to the United States. And a few would get the rest of my father's handkerchiefs.

My job was to accompany families to any one of dozens of booths occupied by Red Cross workers. As each family approached a booth, a Red Cross worker would recite a few well-rehearsed lines of condolence and then hand them a single urn and flag.

After they collected urns and flags, I accompanied families to a communal area where they could have a bite to eat. If people needed to talk, there was an informal spot with comfortable chairs and couches. Most did not choose this option.

Two sisters asked me if they could go to the photo wall where family members posted thousands of snapshots of the missing. They said they wanted to write something on their

brother's photo. I escorted them to a wall that was bordered on the base by hundreds of teddy bears that were placed there by family members of those who died. There were lots of teddy bears at the pier. There were also therapy dogs on hand. These gentle creatures were sprinkled about, offering their intuitive gifts to comfort the children, and grown ups too.

Many of my colleagues had been in this place weeks before, staffing what was known as Children's Corner, spending time with the children while their parents presented DNA samples or applied for death certificates. A family assistance center was also set up on Long Island to offer a more convenient setting for the thousands of surviving family members living in the suburbs just east of New York City.

Photos and intimately detailed descriptions lined the walls inside and outside of the pier. They were also posted on buildings and makeshift walls that surrounded Ground Zero and in various other locations throughout the city. Loved ones described ankle bracelets with nameplates, dimples on elbows, and birthmarks of various shapes and sizes. And there were love poems and pleas for help in finding the missing. Following is a handwritten page I saw posted in Penn Station:

Ray Valdez, age 39, wearing khaki pants, navy blue long sleeved shirt

"My brother arrived at work at 8:30 on September 11. His building was hit soon after. He called home on a borrowed cell. He left this message: 'Liz it's me, Ray. My building has been hit. I made it to the 78th floor. I'm okay but will remain here to help evacuate people. See you soon.' Those were my brother's last words. We have physically searched every hospital on the list provided to us. He was always the type to help one in need. If anyone has seen Raymond please call. God Bless."

I offered an older couple who lost a daughter in the disaster a bag for the urn and flag. Macy's had provided paper shopping bags with handles. Macy's bags will never look the same to me. As I helped them with the bag, I saw the tears in their eyes. I was a little surprised when the gentleman said how well taken care of he felt.

In a conversation a little while later, three brothers shared a slightly different sentiment. Ranging in age from mid-twenties to early thirties, they told me that their brother, a firefighter, left no wife or child behind and that both of their parents were deceased. They wanted to know why they couldn't have three urns, one for each brother. They were also angry about the lack of benefits provided by the fire department. "Just because he didn't leave a wife or children behind, it's as if he doesn't count," said the eldest. The brothers signaled something that was coming, something that would replace the warm feeling associated with the abundance of good will generated in the aftermath of this disaster. Coming are disillusionment, frustration, anger, and feeling overwhelmed with the inevitable bureaucratic nightmare of red tape.

Reconstruction, Recovery, and Reaching Out

Seven years later, survivors of the Oklahoma City terrorist attack continue to struggle. Many are still in counseling and some, particularly rescue workers, have only just begun. Marriages have ended, custody of children has been lost due to new addictions that have developed, and there have been more than a handful of suicides related to the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building. There are also signs of getting through the trauma. An important part of recovery and reconstruction is taking some action that represents triumph over helplessness and despair. We learned about this first hand.

One of the services offered by the agency in the aftermath of 9/11 is bereavement groups

for children who lost parents in the World Trade Center. One group worker made contact with an Oklahoma organization to exchange information and experiences in order to prepare for the work ahead. One day a large box addressed to the children in the bereavement groups arrived in the mail. It came from a group of elementary school children in Oklahoma City.

Inside the box were 55 teddy bears. A laminated card bordered by American flags was hanging from string around each teddy bear's neck. Each card contained a message written by an Oklahoma City child to a child from New York. One of the cards said:

"Dear New York,
I am very sorry about the plane crash. And I am very sorry if someone special to you died in it."

Accompanying each Teddy Bear was a plastic bag with several items inside and a note explaining their significance:

"To the families and friends of the lost:
A candle to remind you of the light they brought to your lives,
A (chocolate) kiss to remind you of the love they continue to send,
A flag to remind you that America will ***never*** *forget,*
A postcard for when you need to reach out,
We promise to be here."

Everything feels different to me now. I remember a conversation I had many years ago with two parents whose son had been murdered. The father said, "It's six years since our twenty-year-old son was stabbed to death in his own home in the middle of a sunny afternoon. The pain of our loss is still sharp and tears are never far from the surface."

Many years from now when September 11th is remembered as a national day of loss, I'm sure I'll think back and try to recall what things felt like before that sunny summer morning.

Who Debriefs the Rest of Us?

By Edward P. Eismann, Ph.D., Clinical Director, Unitas Therapeutic Community

The author, an experienced clinician, reflects on his experiences providing informal "debriefing" to people in his community, including students, colleagues, and strangers; people who hadn't sought formal assistance, but who were nonetheless affected by the tragedies and needed to reach out.

September 11, 2001. It is now 10 am. as I sit dazed before the TV. It is 1 pm. I sit dazed before the TV. It is 4 pm. I and the TV are one. It is 6, 9, 11 pm. It is the next day, and the same pattern continues. And the following day. I finally go to work dazed, robotized, and continuing the TV ritual when I come home. In the restlessness of the night, I have this dream: I am going out to my car and see the side ripped off. I stand and look at the damaged car with shock and think, "What happened to my car? Who did this? Why did this happen?" I did not want to leave it on the city street like this, lest it be gutted further. I move to repair it by putting a thin plywood board to cover the empty space and attach the board with duct tape. Even in the dream, I know this is ineffective, unsafe, and ridiculous, and know that anyone could rip the repair off, get complete access to the car, vandalize it further, or just drive away with it. Logically, I think that the better way to repair it would be to get a power drill and bolt metal to the frame of the open space. But where would I get these resources and what do I know about bolting metal frames to sides of cars? I am lucky to know just how to hammer a nail. So I leave the car with its taped plywood and walk off unresolved, panicked, even in denial about the car itself and my ineffective temporary solution. I then wake up.

I know the dream's meaning; it reflects my feeling of powerlessness, paralysis, and even unwillingness to seek out effective ways to repair the damage. My adrenaline in the face of shock energizes me to take flight, not fight, to escape the unbearable sense of powerlessness. My feelings overwhelm me while my mind keeps saying, "Don't run away, don't just sit there; go help out; go to the Red Cross; go to other relief organizations and do grief work; go downtown and help out doing debriefing work. After all you are an experienced clinician with 40 years experience; how dare you stay at home and do nothing; how selfish; how irresponsible; even how morally wrong!" Now I am heaping guilt upon the foundation of powerlessness and paralysis. I am the car and the ripped side reflects my psychic trauma at the horrific event of our time. I am dramatically aware of the thousands upon thousands of metaphoric ruptured cars in unison with mine and the repairs of the terrible damages that will be needed now and over time. But I sit, dazed, and feel a disembodied self in the midst of this nightmare. I am mending neither myself nor my neighbor, but putting duct tape and flimsy plywood on the wound to convince myself that it is really not as bad as my feelings tell me.

I go back to work. It is the south Bronx, New York City, a bustling community in metamorphosis rising from its own ashes, attempting to revitalize itself. The community has a tradition of failing schools and peoples struggling to keep hope alive amidst terrible social and economic odds. I know this. I am a community mental health clinician in the noble tradition of social work for 35 years. I have

walked these streets and held children's hands as they have grown up. I am walking to a school on Southern Boulevard and I smell polluted air blowing north from lower Manhattan. Reminders of the nightmare are not restricted to TV. They are all around. We cannot get away from the sights, smells, sounds, and images of the nightmare in reality or by 24-hours-a-day coverage on TV. And everyone has a story, not just the people downtown. That's what this story here is about.

I walk into the seventh grade class and get a lot of "Hi, Doc" from boys and girls whom I have known since toddlerhood. Looking at them is a familiar scene. I also stood here when their parents sat in the same seats and, for some, even their grandparents. It seems as though I have been here forever; 35 years in one place is forever for a clinician. We usually change jobs a lot over time. In my time frame here, I have this advantage: I am an emblem of trust and long-standing friendship. With this connection, it is difficult to hold back the feelings in the stories each one wants to tell as we now sit together in "tribal council." To sit with the trusted and protective elder in times of distress is an ancient tradition.

"A terrible and frightening thing has happened to us in our city. What did you hear or see?" Without hesitation, children speak up: "I know a man who was there and still thinks it's a dream; he's still waiting to wake up"' says one child. Another, bursting at the seams, says, "My uncle works in a bank in that area and he saw the plane hit and the collapse of the building too. A friend of my family also saw everything, and burst into tears because she has a friend who works there and she thinks he died. My brother was looking at all this with his telescope on the roof and told us what he saw." I comment: "So, you know a lot of people who were witnesses to this and told you first hand what they saw and how frightened they were. And how did you feel about all this?"

"I felt sad for all those people and frightened too, frightened that it might happen here." Ah, here it is, this is what I was waiting for, the personal expressions of fear, the anxiety about survival. I say to the group: "What do you think about what Jose just said? He is frightened about this happening here, to him." Bad timing! They are not ready for personal "I" statements. A girl quickly responds with more "fact telling" stories: "My mother works downtown and saw the first explosion; she called my father to tell him what happened and my father sat down to look at TV. Then she looked out her window at work and saw the second plane hit. People started screaming and running when the second plane hit. She saw people jumping out of windows and [she hesitates] she said they looked like cartoon people." I say, "Your mother hesitated to put it that way because she knew it was not funny, but it seemed so unreal to her she couldn't believe it. Your mom speaks truly what it seemed like. So many people would put it that way, like an unbelievable nightmare."

By now, hands are going up all over the room. Stories are flooding in. "My friend's mom works in the parking station near the WTC and she saw both crashes. She left her job and went down to pick up her younger children. She got to her car and because she had her badge on, they let her go by. She was so shaken up she said she could not think of going back to work." I comment: "She was a real witness to what happened and she is so frightened about this now; she is in a panic. Does she have some people to talk to about this, to listen to her?" The child says, "Yes, her husband and my mother who is her friend. Actually, her husband worked nearby there and went up to the roof and saw everything. He was scared, too; he didn't know what to do." I say: "They probably will stay scared for a while, like millions of other people who saw this; this is a memory that will stay with them for a long time. That is normal. It is good

they have each other and your mother to talk together, like we are doing here. In fact all of you here are sharing some wonderfully important stories. And I see so many hands up. You are to be congratulated for this."

Linda comments, "My aunt that morning was going to that building for a meeting with others from her school and she got lost and went the wrong way. The others, there were about 100, were in the building. She knew about ten of them personally." I comment: "She must be going through a terrible time, even while feeling relieved that she is alive. You know this from her as she is talking about her experience. I am glad your family is there for her. She will need to talk a lot about this, just as Linda's neighbor will need to do with her family and friends, and again, as we are doing right now."

"My best friend's partner had been laid off from work the day before. She worked on the 107th floor. She said it was God telling her not to work because this was going to happen." I comment: "So she feels she had a special grace that directed her before this happened. That is similar to what Linda was saying about her aunt who was delayed from being there when it happened. There are similar stories here as well as special individual stories. How courageous you are in talking of your experiences and frights here with each other. Go on."

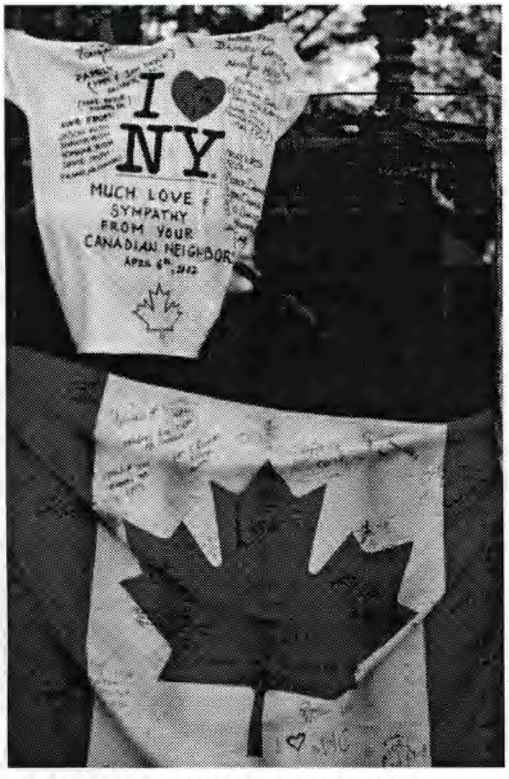
Paul speaks up: "A close friend I've known since a little boy worked on the 107th floor too. When he saw smoke he called my uncle who was his best friend to tell him what was happening. He called his wife to tell her he loved her. We haven't heard from him since." I comment: "And you're still waiting and you have to sit with this terrible fear about him. How do you, your family, sit with this fright?" Child says: "We pray and hope he will show up, that's what we do, that is all we can do." I add: "So a wonderful thing you do is to pray and stick close together as a family, just being together is comforting and makes everyone feel stronger."

There is energy, connectedness, and comfort visibly settling in on my young friends in this tribal dialogue as I listen, clarify, reframe all statements with an empathic response, and hold each statement expressed as a golden nugget. They then begin to become resources of support to each other to counter their collective anxiety.

I finish up the discussion and hang out loosely. I note the anxiety of teachers and staff. We talk one by one and then in groups, informally, at lunch, at breaks, during class time. I find out that teachers are given directives to listen to the children, hold talk time with classes about the children's frights and panic. They, too, are immobilized. What did they do? The real concern the teachers have is that no one is listening to them and their panic. They are being given instructions about the experience to give to the children, but no one is attending their similar anxieties and fears about this event that has traumatized all, not just children. I listen, I invite others to join us in ventilating the emotions of the moment and the fears of things to come. I invite perspectives, reassurance, and logic into the talks. They have each other; they can do what we are doing now as much as needed. Do they feel safe at this moment? We are in this together; God is, we hope, above and we are his children; good people are thinking collectively about keeping us safe. What would help each one right now to feel better? Who needs what? Who needs to check in a lot with others? Who needs particular comfort here which others need to be aware of? And so it goes. All informal. I mingle throughout the day in hallway, lunchroom, gymnasium. I poke my head in classrooms and say, "Are you ok?" as I would to victims in an accident.

I start the trip back to my office five blocks away. I meet Augustine, an artist in the community, who is dressed up with coat and tie. I never saw such attire on him. He tells me about being downtown and seeing

the tragedy firsthand. He says he is dressed up in this formal way because it helps him keep control over his feelings, makes him feel together and whole in the only way he knows right now. He tells of his experience. I encourage him in this. He tells of meeting a woman he knew whom he ran into on 50th Street, and how good it was to see a familiar face. Stopped and had coffee with her and talked. "How good it was you met her. Tell me what you talked about," I say. He recounts them both ventilating their panic, sharing, and listening. I comment, "Do you have others here now that you can continue to do this with?" He talks of friends and family. "And how are they? Do you all talk about this together?" "I am beginning to do that," he says. "Talk to them and hear them out," I say, "the way you and your friend did on 50th Street. And share food together as you do this. Remember how relieving this was to you with her?" He thinks about this and smiles. "Thanks," he says, and seems to find comfort in this suggestion. I then bump into Nino from a children's agency nearby that was going to have a community festival in October. He was concerned because some people felt it was inappropriate to have the festival in the wake of the tragedy. I comment that it could also be seen as a community coming together to strengthen their relationships with each other, and in memory of those they may have lost. He smiles and sees this as a theme for the festival and has renewed hope to keep the festival alive



Friends from Canada show their support at the Ground Zero Memorial

I detour from my usual path to reflect in silence. The silence speaks its wisdom to me and offers me the bolts and metal I seek. In this inner soliloquy it occurs to me that the experiences of the day have given me an insight. It is this: everyone around me has some degree of a ripped car side, some more, some less. All have been impacted by this event, and as I am able and willing to encounter each one I meet in the natural order of the day and say, "How are you doing in the middle of this horror?" I am participating truly in the work of repair, my own and that of the people around me. The flood gates open each time, and the "debriefing" I do not do officially and formally downtown, I do naturally with my neighbors, my students, my colleagues, parishioners, even strangers. I listen without interruption, tracking and empathizing with the fears and plights of all. I ask if they have anyone to keep talking to, and if they do not, I help them internally locate someone to keep talking to, man, or God. I ask them what they will do today to feel safe, to find hope and a reason to get respite in order to go on tomorrow. It is what I would do downtown formally. But this is informal, natural, and perhaps, in that sense, an intervention that reaches the common folk who fall through the cracks. I hope that in some way my availability helps repair the damaged doors of all I meet, no less my own.

And my damaged door does begin to be mended with bolts and metal as I find a way to help others informally to repair theirs. I did not consciously find a way to repair my door, but it found me in all those I met naturally around me who ached as much as those who sought out repair from the formal system. Both go hand in hand, but for the common folk, we are right in front of each other. I saw him and her on the very paths where I naturally walked. They were just the people I met on my street, in my workplace, in my place of worship. They were my neighbors. And I remembered, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." An ancient instruction, but perhaps the one that really saves us all.

Three Days: A Personal Memory

By Michael H. Phillips, DSW, Associate Dean, Fordham University Graduate School of Social Services

Soon after the collapse of the Twin Towers, the author went to work as a volunteer for the Red Cross. In the chaotic days after the tragedy, many volunteers found themselves offering assistance in unexpected ways.

For me, September 11th started as a beautifully sunny, late summer day. When I heard the first plane hit the World Trade Center Tower I, like most New Yorkers, believed a terrible tragic accident had occurred. Our students had arrived at school and gone to classes before any of us knew this was not just an accident. Since I had a small portable TV in my office, colleagues were clustered around it and we saw the second plane hit. In an instant, our world changed. Someone realized that we had to interrupt classes and try to help our students, some of whom might have had friends and/or relatives at the World Trade Center. It was hard to grasp the magnitude of the event, and as I went to the classroom I wondered how I would break the news. I interrupted a class and said that I had some disturbing news. Their first reaction on hearing the news was a total silence. Gradually, some asked questions, most of which I could not answer, and several took out their cell phones and went out to make calls. I sat with the students for a while and tried to help them connect with their fear and plan for what was next for them. It was not until I returned to my office that I learned the buildings had collapsed.

A colleague who had Red Cross disaster training said he was going to the Red Cross to volunteer, and some of us decided to also volunteer. The Red Cross headquarters is only a few blocks from our school, and by the time we got there, slightly after 10am, other potential volunteers had begun to arrive. There were probably a dozen of us with mental health training, a mixture of social workers and psychologists. After a long period of filling out paper work, waiting for the issuance of Red Cross Mental Health team badges, and making calls to our homes to say we did not know when we would be back, we waited to be sent out. Feeling a tremendous sense of frustration, we waited for the vans to take us where we were needed. Some of the volunteer psychologists heard from their private patients and left. Others in our mental health group thought of the possible risks in what they were about to do and, given their obligations, wisely chose not to join the teams being sent out.

None of us were prepared for the chaos and disorganization that follows such a disaster. There was doubt about where we could best be used. Much misinformation was flowing in, and it was hard to get a true sense of what was going on. After what seemed like many hours, the team I was assigned to was dispatched to the Bus Terminal where we had been told many people needed help. When we arrived, we found the building evacuated except for several people in the clinic who had been at the World Trade Center and were in shock. While several of the team stayed with these persons, the rest of us went to mingle with the crowd outside the building to provide support for people who were trying to get home from a "locked down" city. None of this work seemed important given what we imagined the need was at Ground Zero. In

retrospect, I can see how our being there and listening provided reassurance and stability in an unstable world. Later, we were sent to the Pennsylvania Railroad Station where we again mingled with the crowd and gave support to persons who were finding it difficult to cope. One person who I talked to that evening was a homeless person who had lived in the area of the WTC and was now seeking alternate shelter for the night. Late in the evening, I returned to Red Cross for "debriefing," which at the time seemed more like reporting as the eyes and ears of the Red Cross at the disaster. So that first day I learned that, just like a person's coping strategy can be overwhelmed by a traumatic event, an organization can also be overwhelmed. Those who wish to help need to be willing, through our patient waiting, to be a stabilizing force.

I arrived home late. Since I live in Brooklyn not far from the water front, my neighborhood looked like it had snowed while I was gone. The streets and cars were covered with white ash and occasional bits of paper that had blown over from Manhattan. I left home early the next day after a fitful sleep. Stopping at the office to leave messages saying I would not be in, I returned to the Red Cross. Since I already had my Red Cross badge, I went immediately upstairs to the mental health area to be dispatched. It was still a chaotic scene with well over 100 mental health professionals there to volunteer. There were many more volunteers than could be processed, and it still was not clear where people were needed. It was only due to the fact that a former student of mine was assigning people to sites that I was relatively quickly assigned to go to Staten Island. The Staten Island Red Cross office was presumed to need volunteers because many police and firemen live there, because from a number of schools the site could be seen and children had seen the building destroyed, and because that was a site through which many rescue worker were being dispatched to Ground Zero. As we headed downtown, we picked up six exhausted firemen returning to Ground Zero to search for colleagues. Their discussion gave us the first reliable information about the very heavy loss of life and the emotional pain of those who lost friends and colleagues. We dropped them off close to the site where we could see the smoke. The area smelled very much like burning electrical wires, and our throats hurt.

When we arrived at the office in Staten Island, it was unclear where we should be assigned. It was finally decided that we should go to the ferry terminal to provide debriefing and support for rescue teams returning from the disaster site. By the time we finally got to the ferry about half the team decided that they had to leave to see their private patients or because of other obligations. I began to understand why the Red Cross looks for people willing to make commitments to those long 12-hour shifts. The rest of us spent the day listening to exhausted firemen from many different states. This was not easy because I think none of us felt completely comfortable intruding on the personal pain we saw all around us. But we did it because we knew that many were not in a position to reach out to us.

As we looked over at Manhattan, we could see the smoke. It all seemed so unreal on that cool sunny day as I sat with a fireman who was trying to get used to the idea that so many had been lost, and who struggled with his need to go back to that site of danger. Ground Zero clearly still seemed to be a place filled with danger with a continuing risk of collapsing buildings. Yet firemen, EMS, and others were desperately looking for survivors, and exhausted men were coming home sleeping a few hours, taking a shower, and going back to the site. It seemed that I was doing so little, and yet it seemed to be appreciated, even if not everyone was ready or willing to talk. Late in the day, we returned to Manhattan via the ferry. As we crossed the bay, I

talked with firemen returning to the site. They talked about their anguish and anger, and I realized that the ferry was an ideal place to provide debriefing and support. We drove up through a lower Manhattan crowded with emergency vehicles and covered with inches of white dust and papers. It was then that I got my first real glimpse of the awesome damage at Ground Zero.

When I arrived at the Red Cross headquarters, I called the Staten Island office as promised and gave them my assessment of the situation at the terminal. I suggested that persons should be assigned to ride the ferry. I then went for debriefing. I was beginning to realize that I, too, needed to talk. I realize now that my need to talk about what I was experiencing made it difficult for friends and family to be around me, but talking helped me survive. It is so hard to find the words to describe what in some ways is not describable and disturbing to the listener. As I waited for my debriefing, I met some people who were obviously deeply troubled by what they had seen and heard. Among them were some who, it seemed to me, should not go out again. The experience had touched something deep inside them, and they were barely keeping their heads above water. In our group debriefing I got to know some persons who had been working at the morgue at Ground Zero. One spoke passionately that what the men at the site most needed was American flags - a symbol to hold on to in this time of chaos and death.

When I arrived at the Red Cross the next day, I met one of the group I had met yesterday and she invited me to join their team at Ground Zero. The young woman who had spoken so passionately about the need for American flags had overnight arranged for a donation of over 100 small American flags that we picked up on our way downtown. I must admit that initially I had some trouble with giving out flags. Maybe it brought back memories of the Vietnam war era, or maybe it was related to having always questioned the use of nationalistic symbols. But seeing exhausted rescuers brighten up when they received a flag, having persons search for us just to get a flag, and later seeing the flags attached to so many of the rescue worker helmets reminded me once again that it is not what I believe but what my client believes that is important.

Memorial Wall on Fulton Street by Ground Zero

This was an exhausting day filled with differing tasks and experiences in a surreal world of crushed cars and fire trucks, burned out and deserted buildings, air that burned your throat when you took off your mask, and everywhere that thick layer of what was once cement. After giving out the flags, we helped unload a Red Cross truck filled with food into a former store used to feed the workers. One quickly learns in a situation like this that there are no clearly defined tasks. You do whatever is needed, and sometimes unloading a truck is what is needed to stabilize a situation. During the day, I was called to mediate a dispute that was about to become violent about who had the right to give out the water that had been delivered. I came to realize when everyone's nerves are on edge, just being there to listen can be a service. I talked with a policeman who had been on the scene when the plane hit and was filled with guilt that he had not saved more people. It was as though he had not saved anyone, when in fact

he had saved many lives. Eventually, he was able to tell me of his experiences and frustrations in leading people to safety. There were so many different experiences that day: the shaken young man with his search dog for whom this was his first disaster. The resting firemen who said, "It is not us who need you; it is our wives. We have our brother firemen. Who do they have?" The experience of dashed hopes that they may have found someone alive, and the silence that follows the evacuation of a body. The smell of a body bag as it was carried past me on the way to the temporary morgue. I met people, both men and women, from all walks of life who gave up whatever they were doing to come and work on the line. I ran with others to the boats to be evacuated into the bay when it seemed another building would collapse. Later in the day, a National Guard team called me to help with an elderly woman and her disabled brother who had been found living in one of the deserted buildings. It was clear that beyond the trauma of the event, the woman had emotional difficulties. I spent time helping her accept the fact that they needed to leave the area, dealt with her resistance to having contact with her son in Long Island, helped her make contact with him, and finally connected her to a Red Cross housing resource. These and so many other moments crowd into my memory as I relive that day.

At the end of the day, I hitched a ride with a police car leaving the Ground Zero area and went back to the Red Cross for debriefing. By now I knew this was not an optional activity if one was to survive. The next day I left New York for a few days and did not return to Ground Zero until several months later. Even then the sounds, smells, and tensions were still with me. As I left the subway that day several months later, I immediately recognized the smell in the air around the World Trade Center and felt the tension throughout my body. I knew then that those moments at Ground Zero had never left me. How much harder it must be for those who were truly part of the tragedy.

My three days had made me proud to be a social worker. While others left to meet their private patients and other commitments, social workers by and large stayed. While others did not know what to say and often lectured people on how they should feel, social workers knew how to obtain resources and, more importantly, knew how to be there with those in pain. They knew how to reach out to people and did not expect people to come to them. They were there for those who needed them and were able to accept people at whatever point in their traumatic voyage they were.

The Bucks County Police Association in Pennslyvania shows their support at the Ground Zero Memorial

When Crisis Hits Home: A Disaster Volunteer's Response

By Christine L. Plackis, MSW, Social Worker, Sewanhaka Central High School District, Long Island, New York, and Red Cross volunteer

In this narrative the author shares her experiences working double-duty as a school social worker and a Red Cross volunteer. For her students, the September 11 tragedy was compounded by the crash of Flight 587 in November.

September 11, 2001, began like any other Tuesday in a suburban junior-senior high school of 1500 students. The start of another school year was freshly upon us and found me at the beginning of my third year as the building social worker. While I have always loved my work as a school professional, this is a very special place for me, as it is my own alma mater. At 8:00 am, I began the day with a parent conference, conducting a psychosocial history for special education assessment. At 8:45, I attended the "Welcome Back" assembly for the 9th grade and addressed the class regarding how they may get to know me through extra-curricular activities. At 9:00, I planned to join a case conference involving the parent of a 7th grader concerned about her daughter's adjustment to a new educational environment. Here is where it suddenly was not like any other Tuesday. On my way to the case conference, a security guard told me a plane hit one of the Twin Towers. I thought for sure that some Cessna must have been caught in jet wash and accidentally hit the tower. I did not think about it again. About halfway through the case conference, the building principal calmly entered the room and informed the twelve faculty and the parent that two jumbo jets had crashed into the Twin Towers and at this point, it did not appear to be accidental. The room was silent. The looks on the faces ranged from blank to total disbelief. I could barely comprehend what she had just said.

The principal was very proactive. She met immediately with the two assistant principals, the school psychologist, and me. We discussed enacting the crisis management plan. For today, that would mean all of the Pupil Personnel Services staff would station themselves around the building, looking for students and/or staff who might require our assistance. We broke from the meeting, and I returned to my office to take five minutes to try to make sense of what was happening. It was then that it hit me, like that icy blast of wind on a cold New York morning, that both my aunt and my cousin were at their jobs in the city. A sense of panic rushed over me as I had to grapple with the fact that I knew so little about the geographic layout of Manhattan and had no clue how close they might be. I tried to phone my cousin but her building, unbeknownst to me, had already been evacuated. I left a voicemail. I had to hurry and start my building rounds. I tried not to think the worst and actually, it was not that difficult because I had still not seen any of the devastating television footage now rolling in. As I began to circle the building, the principal called me in to her office. She told me very quietly, eyes unwavering from her thirteen-inch screen, that a third jet had hit the Pentagon. Then she directed me to assist a teacher frantically trying to locate his wife.

As I went about the day, I heard bits and pieces of the events. I will never forget the look on my former business teacher's face as she passed me in the hallway and said, "One of the towers has just collapsed." Then, some custodians stopped me to talk about Flight 93 that had just been reported down in Penn-

sylvania. I even heard a report from one of the assistant principals that students on the second floor of our building, southwest side, could see the black smoke coming from the intense fire. No matter what people were telling me, I was determined not to go to the faculty room where I knew everyone was gathered around the large television. I just kept telling myself that rule one of crisis work was not to expose myself to the trauma or I would never be able to help my clients. In between rounds where I spent time with staff and students waiting for word on loved ones, I would return to my office. By early afternoon, I had a message that my cousin had called – she and my aunt had met up and, among thousands of others, had walked to safety over the 59th Street Bridge. I also spoke briefly with my husband, who works for Long Island's major power company. He stated they were all fine and were on very high security alert.

The school building had been orderly and calm throughout the day. As she received new information, the principal got on the public address system and kept us all informed. Less than 100 parents came to take their children home. Our final casualty numbers were not yet in. But when 3:00 pm rolled around, I knew my real work was just beginning.

By day, I am a school social worker. At night, on weekends, and at any other free time, I am a Disaster Mental Health Services Coordinator with the American Red Cross in Nassau County. In July 1996 when TWA 800 crashed, I was a bright, young social worker with a brand new degree in a shiny frame on the wall – I was also unemployed. The plane crash gnawed at me and I knew there must be something I could do to help. I was right. Through his e-mail at work, my husband received notification that the American Red Cross needed volunteers. I called and was immediately assigned to the crash site. After days of working with recovery personnel, I knew this was the kind of work I always wanted to be involved with. I experienced a sense of personal fulfillment every time I gleaned a smile from one of those recovery personnel that I never had with any of my other clients during internships. This was meeting people just where they were – this was real social work. And despite my years of experience and crisis intervention training following TWA, I never expected to have to try to apply my skills to a disaster of this unthinkable magnitude.

On September 11th, I had arrived at the Chapter at 6:00 pm. I left at 12:30am. That was an early night. When I arrived home, my husband was already asleep. My beloved retriever was at the door to greet me. I, nowhere near the point of sleep, laid down on the couch to finally see what the rest of the world had been watching all day. No matter where I had been there were televisions all around but I had no time – or desire – to take it in. With the dog next to me on the floor, at 2:00 am, the full impact hit me. I felt my face twist in terror as I watched the footage of the second plane hitting the south tower – head on. At 2:00 am, alone in the dark, I realized the depth of the horror the country would face. I was angry, saddened, and afraid, but these feelings would motivate me through my work. For the next 14 days, I counseled victims' families, airline personnel, and those who lost jobs. Additionally, I coordinated staff and mediated staff disputes. One of our roles as Disaster Mental Health Workers is as conflict mediators. The core staff of disaster volunteers are skilled, experienced individuals who typically have good relationships. But the trauma, long hours, close quarters, and lack of sleep and regular meals were starting to wear us all thin. Tempers were flaring and needed to be quelled if we were to do any good for the community. In a short sit-down, I could usually get two volunteers to move past their differences and get back to the business of helping. On top of this, I was also charged with overseeing the processing of

more than 300 new Disaster Mental Health volunteers. As applications came in, I would call the licensed mental health professionals to determine their availability for assignments – assignments that were scattered all over, from the airports, to home visits, to the chapter office, and to a local hotel that donated space so we could set up a drop-in counseling center. What impressed me the most throughout all of this was the volume of work in Nassau County – some 30 miles away from Ground Zero.

Some of the crisis work we did with the American Red Cross that had the most personal impact on me was that with the airline personnel, victims in their own right, but in such a different way: trapped thousands of miles from home with no planes flying for days, unsure about how to get in the air again, about the status of their jobs, being victimized repeatedly by hotel bomb threats and by broken promises of getting home. And just like the rest of us, they were trying to process this outrageous tragedy. Listening to and watching them tell their story was incredibly profound and illustrated the diversity of ways we are affected by disaster. I recall the two "rookies" from the group who expressed concern about whether or not they had chosen the right career. There was the middle-aged head flight attendant who seemed to be the "mother" of the group, looking after all those on her crew and being their liaison with the higher-ups. And then there was the crew member we never met, a woman who after 30 years on the job, elected to retire, rented a car, and drove cross country to head back home. When the others reported to us that this woman had left, I felt that fleeting sense of failure; if only we had arrived sooner, maybe we could have helped her work through some of her concerns. But there was no time to dwell at that place – there were others who were looking for help and that was where my attention re-focused.

In the months that followed, the American Red Cross continued to provide emotional support for all of the victims – no matter how this unfortunate role has found them. On a regular basis, I coordinate five on-call teams of mental health volunteers; one team is my own. Since 9/11, my responsibilities now include taking periodic calls for mental health services related to the disaster. When clients phone the Chapter, the operator forwards the call to me and I then set up an appointment with the client for a one-time assessment, where the goals are crisis reduction, and referrals to long-term counseling. Volunteering in this function has truly taken on a whole new meaning, not just in the quantity and delivery of the service, but in the basic practice principles. As a professional helper, I know the rules have changed. Working in the community of my upbringing and currently living in one of the hardest hit communities of human loss, my avoiding exposure to trauma was simply not an option. But reaching out for help was. I surrounded myself with my family every free moment I had. I took time out during the day to sit and talk with close colleagues about the volunteer work I was doing all night. My partner in clinical crime, the school psychologist, came by every morning to ask how I was holding up. As a social work doctoral student, I found that one of my professors has been a constant source of emotional, professional, and academic support, and even allowed me to use my class assignments to reflect upon my experience with this disaster. Although it was difficult to admit that I needed to mobilize my own support networks, I did so because it allowed me to continue with the task ahead, a task of helping that we estimate will continue for many years to come.

At school, we console families and allay the fears of concerned students. Other staff, knowing of my American Red Cross work, came in for advice regarding their young children and for referrals for family members who witnessed the horror of the collapse, some

narrowly escaping with their lives. As the dust settled, the total loss was in. The lost family count included one parent and a grouping of cousins, aunts, and uncles. A former graduate and prominent young man in the local volunteer fire department was also lost. I dealt with that loss on two levels, one for my students and one for my family – that young man was a friend of my cousin, the very same young lady who had escaped Manhattan on foot via the bridge. These losses showed the tremendous resolve of our school community to band together and quash defeat. Our students made ribbons and buttons of red, white and blue that read "God Bless America." They donated the proceeds – about $20,000 – to relief efforts. Our staff rallied around the students – especially those who suffered loss – and donated money, supplies, and their athletic talents to a charity volleyball tournament that raised money to support losses within the community. I, myself, was part of the Pupil Personnel Service Team that was unanimously awarded the honor of "Teachers of the Month" for September 2001 in recognition of the emotional support we provided to students and staff alike. This was an honor I will always cherish, but considering the circumstances under which I earned it, I feel as though it was one I could have lived without.

On a final note, November 12th brought yet more tragedy to our area. School was closed that day in observance of Veteran's Day. As I began my day around 10:00 am and clicked on the TV, it was horror yet again. I felt an eerie sickness as I lay in bed and thought, "Oh God, no." This can't be happening again. I was ready to mobilize for the Red Cross once again when American Airlines 587 went down just a short distance away in Belle Harbor, Queens. But upon calling in for instructions, I was told we were on standby. At 7:30 that night, I got the call that our chapter volunteers would not be needed. Part of me was disappointed; after my TWA experience, I seemed to have this cathartic need to be at the crash site. But I learned shortly after our stand-down call that my strength would be needed within my school community to help face loss once again. One of our students lost her mother on the plane. Our Pupil Personnel Services Chairperson lost his boyhood friend on the ground. I comforted weary, emotionally beaten youngsters and reached out to my supervisor, battered himself after losing many friends to 9/11.

As a school community, we try to recover one day at a time. Being a member of that community, I have two roles: to help others recover and to recover myself. Being with my students is tremendously therapeutic for me. I think unbeknownst to them, their very presence is a comfort to me as much as I try to provide the same for them. The irony in all this stands in the fact that the very office we work in – my office – sits just in front of the backdrop of that crystal blue sky that was the stage for the carnage that was 9/11. And as I sit in my office in this small village on the border of the New York City limits, the familiar roar of the jumbo jets on their final approach to John F. Kennedy Airport is just a little more daunting, and the sight is one I will never view in the same way again.

Reflections on 9/11: Related Disaster Mental Health Activities with Families of Flight 93

By John D. Weaver, MSW, Private Practice

The events of 9/11 have led to many community celebrations of remembrance and reflection. In one small town in Pennsylvania, the program sponsored by the local high school involved reading letters from people who serve at the front lines during times of crisis. The mother of the author's godchild asked him to write a letter for her to read at that event, and the main text of this paper is a copy of his letter to her.

October 5, 2001

Dear Lara,

Your mom asked me to write a letter that could be used as part of the upcoming program at your school. She thought folks there might be interested in the reflections of a tired and deeply saddened American Red Cross (ARC) Disaster Mental Health (DMH) volunteer who has been helping out since the terrorist tragedy struck our nation.

September 11th began as just another day for most Americans. Things changed quickly, though, as the hideous terrorist plot began to unfold. I was in my office at the Northampton County Mental Health office that morning helping several other staff members complete a physical office move that had begun the day before. We were positioning desks, file cabinets, and other pieces of office furniture. Someone got word that there had been a plane crash into the World Trade Center in New York City and my coworkers scrambled to get our TV set working to see the news. I simply kept moving furniture.

Before too long, the office was buzzing as a second plane crashed into the second Tower, another one hit the Pentagon, and another crashed in western Pennsylvania. Most work came to a standstill as more and more coworkers were watching the news or were trying to contact family members and friends. I kept doing what I could to complete the office move.

My office mates kept passing by and telling me headlines that seemed more and more surreal as events unfolded and the towers began to collapse. Some may have thought it odd that I kept working on my tasks for the day. Others knew I'd already taken a phone call from the Red Cross placing me on alert to travel wherever I was needed as soon as my destination could be determined. I have been a disaster relief volunteer for over ten years, and I am a member of ARC's Aviation Incident Response (AIR) Team. Our role is to support family members and everyone else involved in the rescue/recovery process when such incidents occur. Until I was dispatched, continuing the physical activity of the office move was something concrete I could do to help my own office staff as much as I could before I left the area.

By noon, our county offices were closed. I went home and packed, finally watching some TV coverage. Folks in the disaster services field plan for "worst case" scenarios, and yet no one imagined this could happen. By the time my kids got home from school, I'd gotten my assignment. I was to drive to the Johnstown area to support the relief operation for the families of those lost on United Flight 93—the "heroes" flight on which the passengers managed to stop the terrorists before they reached their intended target.

For the next 12 days, I served as the coordinator of the Family Assistance Center (FAC). The FAC is a "safe haven" spot where family members can come together and

share their thoughts, feelings, and memories with one another. There, they can also talk to mental health workers and members of the clergy, doing so in a secure place designed to protect their privacy. Many prefer to avoid the media, lawyers, and any others who might further victimize them at a time when they are quite vulnerable.

Part of our role is to organize family member visits to the crash site, and these are usually followed by a multi-faith memorial service. Most surviving family members need to visit the site, a visit that helps them accept their loss and begin to move forward with their suddenly altered lives. Disasters (and other traumatic life events) will always *change* us, but they need not *damage* us. Our work in disaster relief is based upon the fact that people are incredibly strong and resilient. Each of us builds character as we work our way though events such as these. Gradually, the victims retake control of their lives and shift from feeling like victims to feeling like survivors.

About 500 family members and close friends of those lost on Flight 93 were served by our ARC team. Helping us serve them were the warm wishes and prayers of people all over the world. We received a marvelous array of flowers, cards, banners, gift baskets, comfort kits, and letters of support. Especially helpful were the touching messages from innocent children, some of whom attend a school that was near the crash site. These things all gave great comfort to the families and, when we closed the FAC, these items became part of the permanent memorial to those brave souls who lost their lives while protecting the lives of others.

My experiences with mass casualty incidents always sadden me (something that generally hits us as we end our work) and this was no exception. In fact, this one was worse for me than usual. I cried off and on, all the way home from western Pennsylvania. For several days thereafter, I found myself having what I've jokingly dubbed "random acts of crying" triggered by certain songs, pictures, or news reports. That ran its course but, as I write this letter, I'm tearing up again. I chose to write this for you as a way to pass my time while on a bus ride to New York City. I've had two weeks rest and now I'm on my way to join the larger, ongoing ARC operation there.

Disaster work gives people an interesting perspective on life. For instance, when someone works as many major disasters as I have, some of the pettiness of day-to-day activities can be more easily ignored, and it's easier to keep focused on what's important. During times of tragedy, one thing that is very important is support—support from family members, support from friends, support from communities of faith, and support from others who care enough to share something of themselves when people are in need.

I'm truly privileged to be able to help out as I do when terrible things like this happen. Others may think me a bit strange (or crazy) to give up my time and volunteer as I do. The fact is, the most rewarding moments of my professional career have all come to me as an unintended and unexpected result of my volunteer work with ARC.

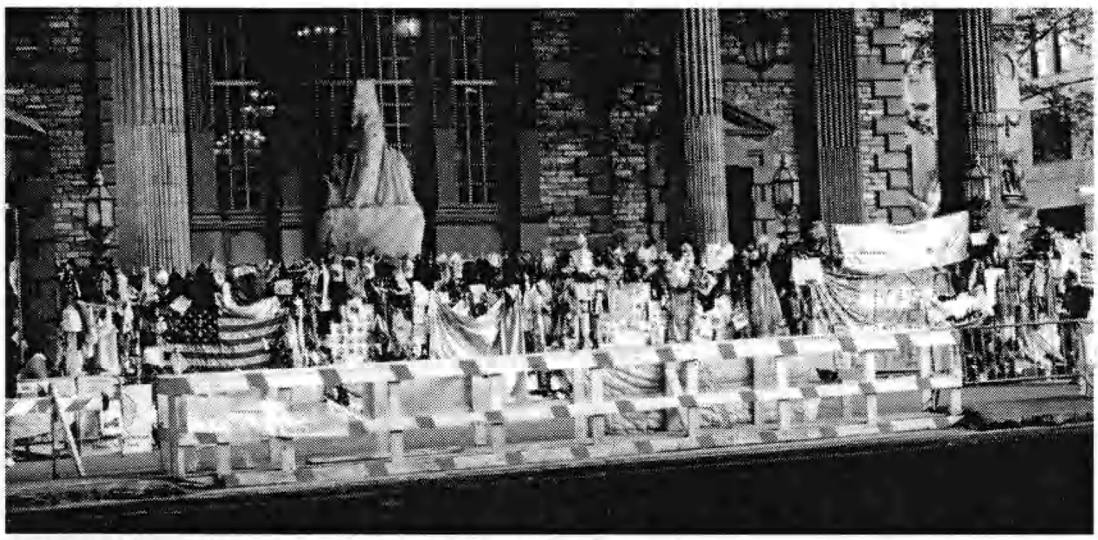
As my bus approaches New York, in the morning mist I can now see the altered skyline at the southern end of this great city. I find myself thinking about the thousands of people who never got to say goodbye to their loved ones, people who never got to finish living out their dreams. Some of them also may never have experienced the joy of helping others who needed help in a time of crisis. Please encourage the audience members to let go of any animosity they harbor toward others and avoid putting off showing loved ones they care. Life is too precious a commodity to squander; as the events of 9/11 have shown us, it can be taken from us in an instant. And please encourage the audience to share some of their time, talents, and treasure helping others. They will, in turn, find they get

back far more than they give.

Love,
Uncle John

Postscript

The combined experiences of working in Pennsylvania and New York were, for me, an awesome reminder of humanity at its best and at its worst. As someone who enjoys writing, I always tend to begin my own search for meaning in stressful events via written reflection. Rather than write things that would be too upsetting for my goddaughter and her schoolmates, I shared only a few things in my letter and I tried to keep a positive focus. The following paragraphs offer a broader picture of my work and some of my more personal reactions to it.



St. Paul's Church on Broadway and Fulton near Ground Zero

On October 5th, I traveled to New York City and began 15 days work as the Deputy Officer (second-in-charge) for the American Red Cross (ARC) Disaster Mental Health (DMH) function for the World Trade Center (WTC) operation. There, I supervised several other Assistant Officers as we continued to manage the efforts of some 1875 DMH workers (1500 spontaneous local volunteers and 375 National ARC volunteers) who were involved at that time. From 9/11 to 10/19, over 73,000 DMH contacts were made by these workers with family survivors, friends, rescue/recovery team members, construction/cleanup workers, and fellow members of the various disaster relief teams. I was struck by the size and scope of the relief effort; despite having so many people to help, we needed more. Standing at Ground Zero and viewing the horror, I found myself thinking that the TV coverage did not properly depict the magnitude of the devastation, nor the great needs of the victims' families, coworkers and friends.

The Family Assistance Center, located on Pier 94, was as big as several jumbo jet hangers. In addition to the large group of ARC workers, there were people from many government agencies, social service organizations, support groups, etc. Therapy dogs and their handlers worked the room, in addition to all the other supports. Three or four site visits for families were run from there daily. People were taken by ferry boat/water taxi to a dock near Ground Zero and then walked in to the viewing location. New York also had many other work sites, including our headquarters office, eight Service Centers (at peak), kitchens, warehouses, lots of mass care emergency response vehicles, a Casualty

Contact Unit, and two Respite Centers (RC). These RCs were for recovery workers, police, fire, and National Guard personnel who were working on the cleanup effort. They could eat, nap, get a massage, watch TV, surf the net, get first aid, talk to clergy and DMH. Everyone involved was doing superb work.

In retrospect, I feel the Flight 93 operation was clearly the finest assignment I've ever had with ARC. My team there consisted of a superb group of volunteers, many of whom were on their first national assignment. The members immediately grasped their duties, dove in, functioned as a team, did whatever it took, and successfully completed the difficult mission. I was disappointed and even angry, at times, while working in New York, that things were not working as smoothly as they had in Pennsylvania. In New York, we had many workers who were causing additional and unnecessary problems, rather than being helpful, by letting their own needs supersede those of the operation. For instance, some folks did not seem to have the patience and/or flexibility to allow them to be successful in something this complex—a problem that arises in all large operations. The most troubling to me, though, were people who felt they had wasted their time and their "trauma expertise" in coming to New York, if they could not work right at Ground Zero. They had forgotten the parts of the ARC training that stressed the importance of DMH tasks at every work setting and/or they somehow lost the vision of our overall helping mission. Luckily, I did get to meet many folks who were fine examples of the same spirit and dedication that I'd seen in my western Pennsylvania team members, and that helped get me through the challenges posed each day by those who were the malcontents and troublemakers.

There are many lasting memories from these events. One will be of standing next to several representatives of the Salvation Army during the second large memorial service for Flight 93 and "passing the peace" (shaking hands and saying "peace be with you") with them. Sometimes there is a rivalry between the ARC and the Salvation Army, but not at a time like this. Another series of Flight 93 memories is of our caravans of buses traveling in a motorcade to the crash site prior to the memorial services. Along our route we saw many patriotically decorated homes, many with memorial displays and signs in their yards. Police were stopping traffic at every major intersection. The officers would always come to attention and salute our passengers as we passed. There was also a larger memorial set up in the small town nearest the crash site, and beside it was always a crowd of people holding supportive signs and waving flags. These simple acts of reverence had me in tears each time we passed. In Pennsylvania and in New York we were able to draw strength from the many cards, letters, prayers, signs, banners, toys (especially the compassion bears), miscellaneous gifts, and floral arrangements that poured in from everywhere, and I cherish those memories.

There were some scary moments too, especially for my family (I tend to generally enjoy a robust sense of "healthy denial" that I will never be at-risk in my disaster relief work). As soon as the events of 9/11 began to unfold, I wanted to go somewhere and help out. My wife and kids accept that, but they were really glad I initially went to the Pennsylvania site rather than New York, fearing there was more potential risk there. By the time I did go to New York, they were more comfortable that things were safe there. That feeling was short lived, though, once the war began, as the National Guard presence there expanded and anthrax scares began. I got to experience one of those firsthand when, on my second-last day in town, our ARC Headquarters building was evacuated, and I found myself in the potentially contaminated group of early risers who had gotten in and had breakfast in a cafeteria where some suspicious,

sticky white powder had turned up. We were quarantined for a few hours while a HAZMAT crew examined the scene; then everyone was allowed back in the building. Officials took our local and home contact information in case it turned out to be the real thing, and that meant I had to tell my wife and kids in case anyone called there about it. They took it better than I imagined they would and, thankfully, it was not anthrax.

Since returning from my ARC DMH assignments at the WTC operation and in western Pennsylvania, I've especially welcomed the opportunities I have had to debrief, support, and thank others for serving and to be debriefed/supported/thanked myself. In addition to that peer support, I want to stress the value of written expression, which is extremely important for both its cathartic, self-debriefing nature and, when the writings are shared, its educational and supportive benefits. I've noticed that more and more people seem to be taking advantage of personal e-mail messages and postings to e-mail listserve groups. This public sharing offers stress inoculation to those considering joining the work and provides a great deal of comfort and peer support to all who have already been out there doing this difficult and yet personally rewarding work.

One of the first things I saw when I arrived in the ARC New York headquarters building was a prayer that simply stated what I see as our mission in disaster relief:

Lord, take me where you want
me to go; let me meet who you
want me to meet;
tell me what you want me to say;
and keep me out of your way.
Father Mychal Judge, OFM
NYFD Chaplain
R.I.P. September 11, 2001

For those who may not have heard of Father Mychal (or may not recall who he was), I will also share this brief obituary:

Father Mychal will probably not be remembered as the first officially recorded fatality following the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11th. His legacy as a caring Franciscan priest, mentor, and friend will solidify his memory in the hearts of all those he touched in the 68 years that he was alive. Becoming a fire chaplain in 1992 was a dream-come-true for Father Mychal. "I always wanted to be a priest or a fireman; now I'm both," he once said. His dedication to New York firefighters would be tested on the 11th of September. According to Cassian Miles, O.F.M., communications director for the Holy Name Province, Father Mychal was anointing a firefighter and office worker at the site. He removed his helmet in prayer and was fatally struck in the back of the head by falling debris.

St. Anthony Messenger
AmericanCatholic.org
10/19/01

Many of my reflections on 9/11 have been spiritual in nature. Spirituality issues seem to have taken on a more prominent role in many lives since these events. Historically there was a closer link between many mental health professions and spirituality and I'm pleased to see renewed and intensified interest as we grapple with changes in ourselves and our world. The longer I am involved in crisis intervention and disaster relief, the more I value resources that help address the spiritual issues that so closely relate to the mental health issues we face in this work. Grieving victims and helpers need to find suitable means and

opportunities for expressing their losses. Part of this comes out through our typical DMH interventions, especially defusing and debriefing, but these brief encounters can only do so much.

Expressions of grief can and should also be drawn out through encouragement of participation in well-planned, carefully timed memorial services.

> *The grief that does not "speak" in some way—through crying, talking, rituals, tributes, or creative expression—remains unresolved.*
> *(Sarah York, 2000)*

Sarah York has written an excellent book designed to help family members, clergy, funeral home staff members, hospice workers, and mental health professionals plan services and rituals that will help them say goodbye and begin to move forward with their lives. Here is the reference:

York, Sarah (2000). *Remembering Well: Rituals for Celebrating Life and Mourning Death.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

I received a preview copy from the publisher while I was in New York as they were willing to make a large donation of the books to ARC workers serving there. This is a marvelous book that is full of real-life stories and practical examples of ways to sensitively address all sorts of issues as families begin to face the difficult decisions that arise when they lose someone they love. Reading it (in small doses) upon my return home helped me process all I'd experienced while working these two assignments. Unfortunately, it also gave my family and friends more reason to question my mental state. In fact, I can remember overhearing one of the secretaries in my office telling another secretary, "He doesn't smile anymore" after I'd passed by them one day. Only my DMH colleagues could relate to this choice of somber reading material that would, at times, restart my tears. It was what I needed at the time. My smile is back now.

One section of York's book contains suggested readings, prayers, and blessings. On pages 203-204 there is "A Litany of Remembrance" (see copy below) by Roland B. Gittelsohn that I've found to be especially helpful. Adapted from a modern Jewish liturgy, this has been used as a responsive reading at several memorial services that have followed aviation incidents, including the services for Flight 93. The service leader will generally read the first lines and the participants will reply by saying "we remember them." Following some incidents, we have also had this printed on small memorial cards that can be given to family members, friends, and all support staff who attend the site visits/ memorial services. I never knew the original source until I read York's book.

A Litany of Remembrance
Roland B. Gittelsohn

In the rising of the sun and in its going down,
we remember them.
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
we remember them.
In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring,
we remember them.
In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer,
we remember them.
In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn,
we remember them.
In the beginning of the year and when it ends,
we remember them.
When we are weary and in need of strength,
we remember them.
When we are lost and sick at heart,

we remember them.
When we have joys we yearn to share,
we remember them.
So long as we live, they too shall live, for
they are now a part of us,
as we remember them.

References

• Gittelsohn, R.B. (1975). *Gates of Prayer*. London: Central Conference of American Rabbis and Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, p. 552.

• Weaver, J.D. (1995). *Disasters: Mental Health Interventions*. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press.

• Weaver, J.D. (1996). Disaster Mental Health Services (Chapter 19). In L. Grobman, (Ed.), *Days in the Lives of Social Workers*, Harrisburg, PA: White Hat Communications, pp. 115-119.

• *Source Book* (Vol. 17), Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press, pp. 397-411.

• Weaver, J.D., Morgan, J., Dingman, R.L., Hong, B.A.,& North, C.S. (2000, August). The American Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Services: Development of a Cooperative, Single Function, Multidisciplinary Service Model. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research*, 27, 3, pp. 314-320.

• Weaver, J. (2000). Working With Those Who Have Experienced Sudden Loss Of Loved Ones. *The Internet Journal of Rescue and Disaster Medicine*, 2, 1 [http://www.icaap.org/iuicode?86.2.1.2]

• Weaver, J. (2000). Sudden Death In Disasters And Transportation Accidents: A Guide To Survival For Family Members And Friends. *The Internet Journal of Rescue and Disaster Medicine*, 2, 1 [http://www.icaap.org/iuicode?86.2.1.4]

• York, Sarah. (2000). *Remembering Well: Rituals for Celebrating Life and Mourning Death.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

9/11, Blood, and the Mosque

By Lloyd L. Lyter, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Marywood University School of Social Work

In this narrative, the author reflects on the opportunity he had within his community to share cross-culturally and gain healing in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. For him, the experience was both instructive and powerful.

On September 11, 2001, I was sitting in a faculty meeting, approximately a ninety minute drive from Manhattan. A colleague who had left the meeting temporarily returned and announced that the World Trade Center Towers had been hit by airliners and had collapsed. My immediate reaction was one of denial and dissociation, feeling that not only could this not be true, but that I couldn't actually be experiencing this.

After a few minutes of feeling stunned, coupled with the disbelief that we continued the meeting, I left the meeting, went to the snack bar to see a television, and began to phone my daughter who lives in New York City and works in theater, at that point not far north of the World Trade Center. Her line was busy. I tried to call my wife. Her line was busy. Repeated tries of both numbers always got the same result. Were cell phone towers out of commission, or simply overloaded? Were my wife and daughter on the phone with each other? I had no way to know which, if any, of these possibilities was correct; I only knew I was greatly concerned and felt totally out of contact and unsure of what to do.

Ultimately, I was able to get through to my wife. In fact, she had been on the phone with our daughter whom she had awakened. It appeared our daughter did not have to be in the theater that day. As she and my wife spoke, she turned on the television to see what was happening – no picture. She didn't have cable and was at the mercy of signals from transmission towers – towers that had been on top of the World Trade Center. Early on in their conversation, it clicked with our daughter that her boyfriend, who also works in theater, had gotten up early and taken the subway to work, also not far above the World Trade Center. She began to call his cell phone – no contact. After several hours of panic and repeated calls, she finally got a return call from him. He had been trapped in the subway under the river, midway between his Queens-to-Manhattan commute. He was safe, but shaken. He said he'd be home later, but not on the first couple of runs of the subway. He'd wait to make sure it was working safely before getting back on.

After hearing from my wife that our daughter was safe but that she was unsure of her boyfriend's status, I decided it was time to head for home, a two-hour drive. Knowing that my wife's brother would be concerned and that I would pass near his house on my way home, I decided to stop in and update him. After a short visit with him I continued home.

When I arrived home and checked in with my wife and sons, I felt immediately compelled to get out the American flag and hang it on its mount on a front porch post. I had been in the military during the Viet Nam era and felt a normal sense of patriotism, nothing more than the typical American, but had a need to hang the flag at that moment. It has hung in that place every day since. As did

many other Americans, my wife and I suddenly had flags in our car windows as well.

Within a few weeks of the tragedy, my wife had reason to be in Manhattan. She made a visit to Ground Zero with our daughter, signed one of the many banners hanging on the perimeter fences, and felt overwhelming emotion. She bought some items from street vendors that served to commemorate the tragedy, provide a small amount of financial support to the various funds that had been established, and showed support for those who died in the tragedy, especially those who died trying to save others. When she came home, she presented me with an FDNY baseball cap. The gift was appreciated, but it was only later that its full import finally dawned on me. Many years earlier while a Ph.D. student in New Jersey, I had the opportunity to work for the City of New York one summer. Each day I took the train from New Jersey to Grand Central Station, took a subway to the Grand Concourse in the South Bronx, and then walked to Roberto Clemente Middle School. I was part of a program the city had put in place to evaluate firefighters' suitability for promotion to the officer ranks. In the approximately twenty intervening years, I certainly forgot the names of all of the firefighters I interviewed and evaluated that summer, but the sense of connection I felt was powerfully reinforced by that simple gift. Just the possibility that some of those firefighters were involved in this tragedy and could have lost their lives caused a powerful response. What must it have been like for the loved ones of those who died?

Some weeks later my brother-in-law, my older son, and I also were able to get to Manhattan. We too made the Ground Zero pilgrimage with my daughter. It felt necessary to make that visit, to be in that space, and to feel that emotion. For me it was reminiscent of my visit to the Viet Nam War Memorial some years earlier. As part of my military duty, I made casualty notifications to loved ones of Air Force personnel listed as killed, captured, or missing in Viet Nam. Years of memories of those families, as well as uncertainty as to the final status of some of those men, flooded me; but being in that space helped settle some of the feelings. I had some of that same sense at Ground Zero.

I felt a need to do something. I wasn't sure what that could be. At least I could discuss the tragedy with students in my classes, some of whom had lost someone in the World Trade Center. Along with some friends (a social worker and a psychiatrist), my wife and I volunteered to provide short-term counseling to workers at Ground Zero but were ultimately not called. I decided that as small a gesture as it might be, I'd donate blood. For many years I was a regular donor, having received my three-gallon pin for my last donation. For one reason or another, I hadn't donated in several years. I began to search for a blood drive in my home area or in one of the areas where I typically travel in Pennsylvania. For the next couple of weeks nothing came up that coincided with my schedule, and calls to the Red Cross told me that they were booked solid. Some days later I found a notice in my local small town newspaper for a blood drive that weekend, only ten minutes from my house.

The blood drive I was privileged to be part of was held in the local mosque. Although I live in a wonderful culturally diverse community, I had never given any thought to the possibility of there even being a mosque in the area. I knew where numerous churches, of many faiths, were. There's a very large Catholic church within walking distance of my house. I know the location of several synagogues in my area. Why had I never thought about or noticed a mosque? My lack of awareness is probably typical for the people in my community, but that didn't make it more acceptable for me.

As I drove to the mosque, I thought about why I had never seen it before. It was on a

side street in a part of town that I drive through but don't generally have occasion to stop in. What's more, the mosque seemed not to have originally been built for that purpose, but apparently took over an existing, somewhat nondescript building that wouldn't be recognized as being a mosque unless you happened to see the sign on its side. As I drove, I also thought about the symbolism of attending this particular blood drive. It was especially important for me to support a blood drive sponsored by the Muslim community.

I know that the perpetrators of the attacks on the World Trade Center were Muslim. I had faith that the great majority of Muslims, both in the United States and around the world, were not supportive of that action, that religious intolerance, as well as bigotry generally, thrives in the United States and elsewhere, and that American flags were prominently displayed in businesses in my area, including those owned by Muslims. Therefore, I felt a need to connect with some segment of the Muslim population in my own community, even if only on the most basic of levels. As I parked my car and walked into the mosque I had some misguided concern over how I might be received. Upon entering, I saw racks for shoes and placed mine there in deference to the place and the culture I was entering. From appearances, virtually all of the non-Red Cross people in the mosque were Muslim and had removed their shoes. The Red Cross personnel still had shoes on. Given my familiarity with the paperwork and process of blood donation, I paid little attention to those issues. Given my interest in human behavior and cultures, I paid significant attention to those issues.

It appeared that the great majority of the donors that day were Muslims, many of whom spoke no, or only broken, English. Unfortunately, it appeared the Red Cross workers had not been well prepared to deal with the religious, cultural, or language differences. I give full credit to the workers, both paid and volunteer, but did observe some behaviors that can only be described as, at least, uninformed, or, at worst, stereotypically 'ugly American.' When language issues arose, some of the workers spoke louder and slower. Some asked me the significance of the building we were in, and why many, including me, had removed our shoes. There was some obvious frustration on part of the workers that can probably be attributed to the combined facts that they were trying to bridge a language barrier and at the same time were dealing with many first time donors who had no knowledge of the process. I certainly did not see evidence of any obvious judgments being made about the donors as people, only ignorance of their religion, language, and culture.

As I had the obligatory orange juice, pretzels, and donuts after getting up from my donor table, several people, obviously connected to the mosque, came by to thank me for contributing to their blood drive. One relatively younger man, who appeared to be paid special deference by many of the others and who seemed to be in charge, also stopped by to thank me. I told him I was pleased to donate and that I felt special significance at being able to donate at this time in a mosque. He seemed to understand, simply nodding acknowledgement and not asking any questions. We spoke about the large turnout, larger than I expected to see in my community, especially among an almost exclusively Muslim population, and larger than even he had hoped for. He informed me that once the blood drive was scheduled, a call was put out to all of the mosques in the region. Many of the donors that day came from significant distances in eastern Pennsylvania, and some came from as far away as Trenton, New Jersey. The response surpassed all expectations.

I was pleased that I had found a convenient blood drive. I was more pleased that it was in my own community. My greatest pleasure came from the education I experienced

that day. I've had the opportunity to experience many cultures around the world, and I have learned something from each. In my own community, in this particular time, I learned that the Muslim population was larger than I was aware of, even though many live in my own neighborhood; I learned I still harbored some misguided apprehension at stepping outside my own culture, even in my own backyard; and I learned that within a given geographic community differing cultural communities can come together to support each other. I only wish more of my cultural community had come together with the Muslim community that day. I hope the Red Cross workers learned some things as well.

Six Months Later: A Therapist Remembers 9-11

By Michelle Emery Blake, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Southern Indiana

These are the author's reflections about learning of the terrorist attack, of preparing to work with clients that day, and of her own existential growth in the process.

Photo courtesy of ABC News

It was one of those perfect Midwest mornings when late summer conjoins with early fall. I had listened to clinical tapes during my two-hour Tuesday morning commute and reviewed a mental list of the tasks I expected to perform during my weekly "clinic day." When I stepped out of my car, I waited momentarily to walk to the building with another therapist.

He asked, "So have you been following the terrorist activity?"

I assumed he was making small talk about some incident that had happened in the Middle East.

"No," I said. "What happened?"

"A plane flew into the World Trade Center a little while ago," he answered. "When I was getting out of the car, they were saying that there seems to have been a second plane."

Once we were inside the building, a small black-and-white television was whisked from its storage place and the four of us who were present—three therapists and the administrative assistant—stood glued to the set, open-mouthed. Two planes were confirmed as having slammed into the towers. A third plane had damaged the Pentagon. A fourth plane had crashed. A car bomb was suspected near

the White House. Things seemed to be happening at twenty-minute intervals.

"Like a Tom Clancy novel," were the words that both the administrative assistant and the TV commentator used—almost within seconds of each other—to describe the emerging scenario. I remember having almost surrealistic memories of air-raid drills when I was in elementary school during the Cold War. I recall one drill that had been a surprise even for the teachers. The feelings I was having today, September 11, 2001, were frighteningly similar. Some part of my being wondered whether I—or any of us, or our planet—would be alive by the end of the day. If we were, in what kind of world would we live? I called my husband, who was still sleeping, to tell him what had happened. When I told him I loved him, I wondered if it might be for the last time.

It was at that point that I realized I had to choose between the existential panic that could so easily set in, and the need to be of some use to the clients I would see that day. Either nobody would keep their appointments, or we would be swamped with emergency calls. I realize that I had decided to remain at the practice instead of going back home. The drive back was a bridge I would cross—literally—when the time came.

The decision to remain meant that I then had to figure out a way to help clients. We were all faced with the same crisis, and I had no guarantees of safety to offer. It was at that moment that I recognized that real safety is an internal condition, rather than an external one. Much of what we perceive as external safety is illusion. Most of what we do in psychotherapy is to be present to clients and to offer what support and help we can as they—and sometimes we—struggle with this reality.

Internal safety at that point meant connection. My initial reaction had been to telephone my husband, even though I knew logically that neither he nor I was in immediate danger. (As he was to remark later that day, smaller cities have their distinct advantages.) By choosing to remain at the practice, I would be with some of the best people I knew. I would be offering hope, and perhaps some healing, in the limited way that was available to me, and whether I lived or died, this day would have some meaning. In the midst of this came a kind of peace, a wholeness, a recognition of the sacredness of life that would seem akin to what theologians describe as grace.

My memories of much of that day are spotty, impressionistic. I had been at the practice only three weeks, and I remember that day as a time of deepening therapeutic relationships. A few people used their time to make decisions about travel, to plan for personal safety, or to examine priorities. Mostly, however, clients who attended therapy groups came for mutual support as they expressed shock and disbelief.

We are in the Midwest, and we got off easy. We do not see an altered skyline as part of our daily commute. We do not each know someone—or perhaps several people—who won't be coming back. We probably do not have to worry about being the next target. Yet, the events of that day—and the feelings they catalyzed—did impact therapy, more for some than for others. In the weeks that followed, clients described sadness and depression, anxiety, vivid nightmares, anger, and grief. A couple of individuals expressed relief after hearing from family and friends who lived or were traveling in the Northeast. Some individuals considered the kinds of emergency preparations they might need. Others focused in a new way on pursuing goals and dreams. The full-time therapists continue to report having more new clients requesting services than can comfortably be accommodated.

Today, March 10, 2002—the eve of the half-year anniversary of that terrible day—the future, even in our corner of the world, seems less certain than it did September 10, 2001. At some level, all of us are waiting to see what happens. In the meantime, we live.

WHERE I SAT AND WHAT I KNEW

By Michelle Simon, Director, Interfaith Neighbors, Clinical Program Services

The author is a clinical social worker for a community-based social service agency in New York City, and is currently the Co-Director of The Peace of Mind Project, a program created in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11th. For the past six and a half months she and her colleague have been providing support, training and consultation to school and youth work professionals around myriad issues related to 9/11, including crisis intervention, bereavement, conflict resolution, and tolerance.

On the morning of September 11th, I sat in horror and intrigue in front of my television set and watched the World Trade Center burn, smoke, then fall. Only a few miles away, thousands of people spent the last moments of their lives in terror as I sat helpless, crying. For the next several hours I was mesmerized by what I was seeing before me. Listening to the confusion and uncertainty about what might happen next, I feared for my life and for the lives of my loved ones. I knew I would never be the same.

On the morning of September 12th, I sat around a table in the main office of a school in East Harlem. At the time, I was the administrator of the school's after-school program. I had reported to the school as was required of all social workers, to be part of a crisis response team. As I listened to the other team members tell their personal stories of the prior day, I felt disconnected and numb. At times I felt as if I was actually outside of my body. Everything was terribly wrong. I kept asking myself, "How am I possibly going to help children make sense of this tomorrow?" I knew that people were looking to me for answers.

On the morning of September 13th, I sat and listened to the school principal, who had started less than a week before, brief the teachers and the rest of the school personnel about how the day was going to be structured. When I looked around the room, I saw teachers crying, shaking, looking dazed. I felt inexperienced, unprepared, unqualified. And yet, I had been charged with the responsibility of providing support and crisis counseling to the school community. Although I was unsure of how the day would unfold, I knew the social worker in me would take over.

That same evening, I sat at a phone, facing a wall, in a long row of people. Several hours before, I had walked across town to The Red Cross. They took any person that fit into the category of "mental health worker," I didn't have to show identification or credentials. Squeezed into a van with ten other volunteers, I looked at unfamiliar, nervous faces. For eight hours, I helped man a missing person's hot line. As I listened to crying voices on the other end of the line, I wondered what was in store for these people. They begged me to tell them all I knew. I knew nothing.

On the morning of September 14th, I felt an intense resistance to being around people. I sat in my apartment debating whether or not to go to work. I was so angry. I called and said I would not be coming in. I went to church for the first time in a long time. I could not speak to God. I just wept. It was the only thing I knew how to do.

On the morning of September 17th, I sat in my office with the door closed. I cried as I spoke to a colleague on the phone and told her that I could not keep doing the job I had been doing for the past two years. September 11th had changed everything. I had to be happier in my work. My supervisor called to ask me why I had not come into work the

day before. I broke down. Before I knew it, I was resigning from my position. I knew I was taking a huge risk.

On the morning of September 18th, I sat and listened to my boss tell me that I was letting everyone down. I began to assure her that I wanted to stay at the agency but that I needed to work more closely with people. Her tone softened. We talked for a long time, trying to help each other make sense of the events of the past week. She questioned whether I was being too hasty in my decision. I explained how isolated and lonely I felt working behind a desk, pushing papers, being an administrator. I missed being in a direct service role. I missed doing what I was good at. I had been unhappy for a long time. I knew I was doing the right thing.

On the morning of September 19th, I sat and began making arrangements for my departure from the school in six weeks. I initiated a purposeful chain of events that would allow me to transition conscientiously out of my position, but not without moments of uncertainty and doubt. The next six weeks would be painful in many ways. I had to say goodbye to children and families I had known for close to two years. The staff team that I had struggled and grown with showed me respect and love. No one seemed to care about or understand my reasons for leaving. I did not expect them to. I knew that in this role, I could not effectively serve this community anymore.

On the morning of September 20th, I sat among peers. For the first time, I had the opportunity to process my experiences of the events of September 11th. Sharing my thoughts and feelings in a safe space allowed me to feel whole again. As I gave voice to fear, confusion, grief, and anger, they took their rightful place in my consciousness...ever present but manageable...newfound teachers that would guide me on my ensuing journey. I knew that I had begun the healing process.

A Lump in My Throat and a Gift From a Far Away Place

By Kathi Morse, MSW, Program Coordinator, North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center

In November, after two months of providing bereavement counseling to the Long Island community, a box arrived from Oklahoma City that brought much needed joy and hope to the author, the team she worked with, and the children who received the gifts.

Following the attacks on the World Trade Center, our Long Island, New York, our agency went into overdrive working long intense hours to serve and support the community. We met with hundreds of children and adults in an effort to promote stabilization. We talked about reestablishing a sense of safety and encouraged individuals and families to cope with their feelings of fear, anger, anxiety, and sadness. We worked to support people's natural coping mechanisms and to get support groups up and running for those families who felt a need to 'connect' with other survivors.

We met with mothers and fathers whose adult children died that day. One man, Mr. W., called anonymously one morning and softly inquired as to what services we were providing for families. He stated he wasn't sure that he would take advantage of anything. He was hesitant to disclose exactly what loss he had experienced, but his careful inquiry let me know that whatever it was, he wasn't able to talk about it at this time. I tried to help him to feel safe and comfortable. I thought I had done a pretty good job. Before hanging up, he promised to call again soon to let me know what he would like to do. A week passed and then two, and then several more...and no call.

About two months later, Mr. W. called. He said that he was ready to come in. He explained that he had gone to a walk-in-center in the area but it was closing and he wanted to join an ongoing group. "Do you have a group for parents who lost adult children in the World Trade Center?" he asked. We did. He went on to say that he lost his only two children, a son and a daughter, on September 11th. I could feel my breath being taken away. I marveled at the fact that he was still functioning and moving forward.

He now credits the group for being one of the reasons he is able to get up each day. His quiet courage in the face of such devastating loss is one of the reasons I am able to get up each day and face the burden of this work.

We also met with siblings, fiancées, new brides, spouses with young children, and, of course, the children, from 4 years of age to 16 years of age. Meeting with the children the first time was difficult. I didn't know how much they knew, or would feel comfortable in asking. Billy's daddy was a businessman and Billy was sure that his dad was alive in the rubble at the World Trade Center. He knew his father would be returning home. Or so I thought.

One evening in the group the other children were sharing stories about going to the viewing platform erected especially for the WTC families. As each of them who had been there told their story, Billy proudly exclaimed, "I love to go there!" All eyes were on Billy as he described how "my daddy would take me up to his office and let me twirl around in his chair."

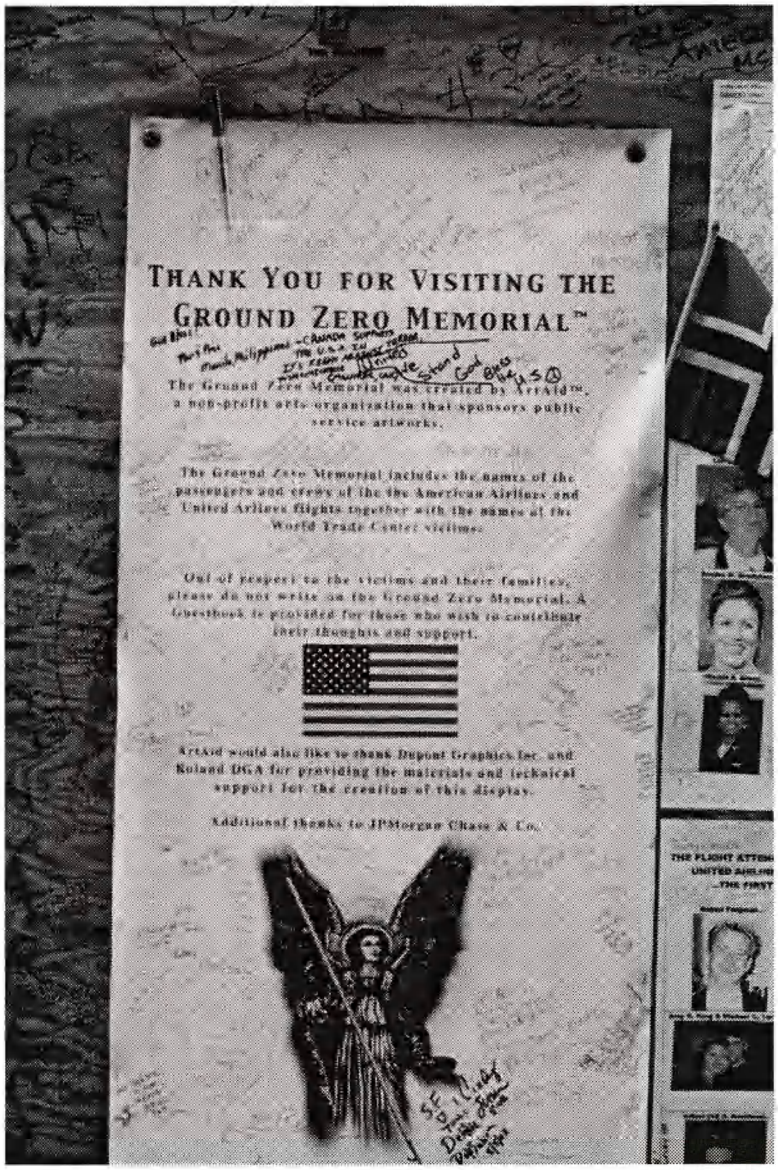
With a lump in my throat, I told Billy, "That's a beautiful memory to have, going with

your daddy to work." And, then he must have realized and said softly, "Yeah, I know, I'll never get to go around and around in the chair again. I'll never get to see my dad again." What could I tell a seven-year-old boy that would keep him together and yet help him face the reality of his father's death? I thanked Billy for his remembrance and talked about how important it will be, as we move forward, to talk about memories of their dads.

As the accumulation of calls like Mr. W.'s and recollections like Billy's add up, the weight of this work becomes overwhelming. Thank goodness for the support of colleagues, near and far. One afternoon during the first week of November, at the end of the day when I was cleaning up to go home and the night ahead looked too short and incapable of providing the respite I needed, something miraculous happened. A large box about the size of a computer carton arrived at our agency. I stood alone as I cut open the tape and the cardboard flaps pushed out, giving me a glimpse of soft acrylic fur colored black, tan, or gray. It was a bevy of stuffed animals, a group of critters that had been sent to the children of 9/11 from the children of Oklahoma City.

Immediately, I called for the team I work with to share with me in this moment of joy. It felt so good! My heart was racing a little bit and I felt this surge of excitement that I couldn't find words for, that I hadn't felt since September 11th. Each animal was wearing a laminated and personalized note of good wishes, which said, in part, "You are holding a gift of love, donated by the manufacturer and tagged by caring volunteers in the Oklahoma City, Oklahoma area, and It is a gift from our heart to yours." A cheerful drawing was added on the notes as well. The package came from The Kids Place, a bereavement center in Oklahoma that was created in response to the 1994 Oklahoma City bombing.

The power of human kindness filled the



room. The Ida Freeman Elementary School, in collaboration with The Kids Place, had put together baggies with postcards from Oklahoma City, a Hershey's Kiss, a candle, and a poem surrounded by American Flags. In addition, there were handmade friendship bracelets mixed in the box from one of their local churches. Our staff of social workers stood around the table and together started lifting the baggie kits, the bracelets, and the critters out of the box, reading the notes aloud to each other. Smiles and tears intermingled. I look back and I am sure some people didn't understand or grasp the powerful impact this

act of kindness had for me. As a result of this gesture, I was infused with new energy, compassion, and hope.

The week before Thanksgiving, I felt we should use this gift to support the ability to be thankful, even in the face of grief and terror. Each year in our bereavement program, we struggle with families to look beyond their grief. It's never easy, but this year the magnitude and terror of the event made "looking beyond" seem all but impossible. The arrival of the box of critters gave to our families what I felt was a reason to be thankful that was easily embraceable.

They could be thankful that there were people who, though they had also suffered, were able to understand their pain and reach out. By reaching out, they offered hope and maybe a glimpse into the future. It was just what they needed. Handing out the stuffed animals, I sensed an energy being passed on to the children as they closed their hands and arms around the bears and seals and rabbits. I think they felt it, too. I gave the zip lock kits to the adults to share with their children when they got home. Though the candles in the bags weren't lit, the room was illuminated with the light and warmth of this special gift from a far away place.

Surviving Firefighters

By Steve Haggerty, MSW, Chief Operating Officer, Hudson Alliance Corporation

In this narrative, the son of a firefighter reflects on the future of the FDNY in the aftermath of 9/11. He concludes with his own personal tribute to these heroes.

Photo courtesy of ABC News

My dad retired from the FDNY in 1985. He had been assigned for 15 of his 20 years on the job to Engine 40, on the Upper West Side. Engine 40 and Ladder 35 responded on 9/11. Thirteen men went to the World Trade Center and only one came back. Their story has been well documented in the New York City daily newspapers, and more recently in the March 2002 issue of Vanity Fair, so I won't reiterate the personal stories of these men; rather I will attempt to tell a story of a son's response to the loss, grief, and coping demonstrated by surviving firefighters.

One evening after a horrible fire in Manhattan that he was involved with, my dad confided to me that he was "a professional hero, but, nobody knows that, and I kinda like it that way." I was probably 17 or 18 years old, and at that point in my life, like so many adolescents, struggling in my relationship with my dad. I dismissed his comments as bravado, probably tainted by his consumption

of alcohol. It was only after 9/11, seeing the firefighters being inundated with gifts of art, tickets to shows and cruises, hanging out with celebrities, and being wholly embraced by America as heroes that his words came back to me. I clearly remember thinking, "These guys are in over their heads."

As a social worker, trained in and experienced with crisis intervention and having worked clinically with children and families, I knew some about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. As a trained hospice volunteer who has lost both parents to cancer and as the only one in my family of seven children to have gone to college, I knew something about grief and survivor's guilt. As a volunteer firefighter in up-state New York's capital region, I have responded to calls with a new humility and with pride since 9/11. But I was in no way prepared for the gut-wrenching experiences of being at a funeral service for a fallen FDNY captain.

With a couple of buddies, we ended up after the funeral at the home of a firefighter who had worked in the same firehouse and knew my dad before he passed away in 1989. Suffice it to say that this fourth generation Irishman sang dirges into the wee hours. And, I left the next morning with an E40/L35 T-shirt off the back of firefighter Teddy McVey, a gift from him to me after we had spent some hours together. I wear this t-shirt, and now new and other FDNY merchandise, with a pride I can't begin really to explain as I cannot pretend to understand it all. But more importantly, I left that morning with an impression that has haunted me since. The surviving FDNY firefighters really are in over their heads. Not just on the job, but off the job.

Firefighters long have maintained a brand of machismo that is validated every day, supported in the firehouse, expected at the fire scene, and managed through a brotherhood that exceeds definition of normal bonding. They carry a cynicism and a sense of irony that is manifested by a sarcastic wit by some, a brooding silence by others; still others express a point-blank gruffness well documented about all New Yorkers and epitomized by the NYC firefighter. A few bear it all with a grace and humility that will bring tears to your eyes. Actually, all the forms of expression can bring you to tears, either through laughter or sadness. The opportunity to be immersed in this atmosphere has come to me at funerals and during visits to my dad's old firehouse on 66th and Amsterdam. I feel blessed to have had this experience since 9/11.

However, the impression, though washed by time and despite my best efforts to forget it all, comes to me again and again as I read articles about the cleanup efforts at WTC, hear about recovered remains, watch again with horror the taped events of that day, and recount in storytelling with friends and family where we were when the planes hit, what we have witnessed and experienced since. I am obsessively worried about these guys. It seems to me it is a matter of time before we read that a firefighter got killed in the line of duty taking some unnecessary risk, or that a firefighter has killed himself while off duty. And if Oklahoma City is any sort of predictor, then soon, clustering on anniversary dates of 9/11, the emergency responders from New York City will begin to crumple. The machismo, a fine coping mechanism day in and day out, ain't gonna carry these folks through the grief reaction, post traumatic effects, and guilt they feel simply for being alive when so many of the brothers have died. Risks will be taken on the job, and risky behavior after their tour of duty, when their unwillingness to talk about it with each other and pact to not discuss it at home catches up with them. Spiritually and emotionally these guys are on a diet that will lead them to a kind of anorexia that we know can and does kill otherwise healthy people.

The loss sustained by the FDNY includes leaders on the job. As any firefighter arrives

on a fire scene, he looks around to see who else is there. When he spots that one fireman, (the firefighter's firefighter) who, for him, epitomizes the guts and skill and experience on the job that he thirsts for, he relaxes, comforted by the presence. It is like a sandbar in very deep water; you set your toes on the sandbar and you feel safe. Many of these guys are gone. Guys are getting off their rigs at the scene and seeing ghosts, or seeing only reflections of themselves in the eyes of their buddies, fleeting images and certainly not comforting.

New leaders have emerged. Some of the new leaders are qualified and gifted and over time (and even some right now) will convey the same comfort. Some are newly minted lieutenants or captains, promoted after 9/11 to fill voids; some are in over their heads. And most all feel an associated guilt for being promoted in the wake of the losses. Acting decisively and with determination takes confidence, and confidence on this job is everything! A team coordinated by a command structure is able to mitigate an event, even a small trash fire, but the command structure of the FDNY has been compromised. The effects of this compromise on a larger scale can be death. It is unspoken in most firehouses; one can almost touch it, but it is too slippery to hold onto... this new reality in the FDNY. Guys no longer love their job. Guys know now, in a way never before presented to them, that this job can be fatal.

Off duty, a firefighter works a part-time job, coaches a little league team, golfs, fishes, and generally enjoys leisure activities like any other blue-collar worker in America. Off duty, a firefighter with a family goes home and tends to the children; inevitably, because he is occasionally off duty during normal business hours, his children will be with him. As a kid, I spent a lot of time at a bar stool drinking Shirley Temples. In most communities, the firefighter is known. My dad was "Danny the Firefighter," and as I got older when I was looking for him, I'd stop in his local haunts and be greeted by the bartender as "Danny the Firefighter's boy." Casting aside for the moment all allusions to alcoholism, its etiology, diagnosis, and treatment, the reason why any firefighter is in a bar off duty is that there, among men, he can talk a bit about the job. The typical firefighter does not go home and talk to his wife about the fire he has fought. The typical firefighter does not go home and process his feelings about the job, its command structure, or its pitfalls. The typical firefighter will cajole, jab, poke fun at, or otherwise tease another firefighter who slips and mentions that he was talking about this or that with his wife. I'm not passing judgment here; I'm just stating how it is. It creates an unwritten pact among the firefighters about acceptable behavior regarding their ability to talk about their experiences. It is a very rare firefighter who can tell you that he has talked with his family about 9/11. A firefighter's wife will tell you that most of what she knows about what happened on 9/11 and since has come to her from listening in while her husband talks to another firefighter.

Off duty, the firefighters are at great risk for substance abuse. Their unwillingness to process 9/11 and the effects on their souls and psyches since will become manifest later as liver disease and other medical complications due to such abuse. Ironically, they have bottled up their grief, and it will kill them if they don't find a way to put down the bottle and start talking to their loved ones.

At the change of shift, a firefighter going off duty faces a bit of a dilemma. With parallels to a post war experience for veterans, the firefighter returning to the normalcy of the home environment meets it with a kind of silence. At the firehouse, they do stuff that matters. On duty, they are available at the drop of a bell to rescue, save property, and perhaps do something that really counts in their minds toward this credit America has bestowed on them as heroes. Since 9/11, the

heroes of the FDNY may feel the need to do something to justify their new acclaim. Many times, rather than struggle with that silence in their families, they will stay at the firehouse, go off on some job with a buddy, or go to the bar. And rather than deal with the guilt associated with surviving the WTC incident and the lavish donations to their company, they will find a place to be that is other than their home. These places are as numerous as the firefighters themselves. In their loss, they seem to be lost. It seems to me that they are kind of drifting through their off-duty experiences till they can get back to the firehouse where they matter.

The good news is that there are programs, professional clinical services, and spiritual retreats for the FDNY and their families. And some firefighters participate and have benefited. It is a great sense of relief to me to know that this is so. Additionally, some firefighters are coping very well, having been able to dialogue as a matter of course with the people in their lives who matter. And I imagine that most, like all the FDNY before them, will manage just fine, thank you, without all this clinical mumbo-jumbo; they'll "do their 20 [years on the job]", and retire. They'll carry with a fierce determination the fact that they worked the best job in the world, but I'm clearly seeing that they will be scarred from the events in ways that no one ever imagined. Perhaps, rather than a pride that all this adoration we are bestowing on them is intended to create, they are carrying a shame that cannot be uttered.

The FDNY believed that if you sent them to hell, they'd put it out, but on 9/11 they got their asses kicked. Can you imagine, as a kid, witnessing your dad getting beat up on the street by another guy? What can you say after the fact that would in any way make your dad feel like he is still okay in your eyes? We witnessed them get beat up, and we have responded by giving them the key to the city. This, I think is what the FDNY is dealing with. The firefighters' silence is grounded in a shame they feel; they have no idea what to say, so they say nothing. If only, somehow, the pride and the love of the job could be restored, I could sleep better at night. I guess I know that there will be no miracle cure, that time will take its course and eventually heal the wounds of the organization. It won't come quickly enough for me.

This image was stenciled on an electrical box near Ground Zero

My friend and therapist told me about a woman who went to Hiroshima recently and sat down wearing a sign that read: "I'm American, and I'm willing to Listen." People came to her and talked to her. I have written a ballad to the FDNY. I have had occasion to sing it before some small crowds and gatherings of friends. I have a fantasy of being able to sing this ballad at each firehouse in New York City, and afterwards, as a son of a firefighter and a clinician and a chaplain in my volunteer fire company, have a talk with the guys about taking care of themselves. Naturally, in my fantasy, everyone is okay, and no one gets killed in the line of duty, and the guys begin to talk with their families about what they are going through. Until then, I'll just have to trust that my dad (dead since 1989) helped me write this ballad to the FDNY.

Three-Forty-Three

Now lest we forget, we'd do well to remember
The horrors of Tuesday, eleven September
In New York City the Bravest did run
In response to the call at tower two, and tower one
Tuesday September eleventh in New York City

It was change of shift so there were more to enter
When the alarm dispatched of the terror
Two planes had slammed right into the center
Of the icons for the city, twin treasures
Two planes into the towers at World Trade Center

Close your eyes you'll see them taking their paces
Running upwards as those running down,
Had their tears and their years and their fears in a frown
Frozen on soot covered faces
Brave lads into the towers that fateful day

Now there's no soul left to tell if there was a call
They didn't know, no one thought both towers would fall
And there leave, with a heave upon all this great city
Such a grief unimagined, such a sorrow, oh, what a pity
A fall, a grief and a great nation's pity

But please, the Bravest will do, and no we can't tell you why
Now we're humbled, and yes we are proud, we are the FDNY

What a firefighter knows and takes to his heart,
Is what others only think or theorize
That the needs of the one outweigh at times,
The needs of the few or the many
So they rescued, and yes ran in
But we didn't begin to realize
Such a cost would be taken to bring us to our knees
And there to wipe our wet eyes
On our knees we wipe our wet eyes
But please, the Bravest will do, and no we can't tell you why
Now we're humbled, and yes we are proud, we are the FDNY

The squads and the engines, the ladders all
Are the company of men first responders to the call
Not a siren, a horn, or even a bell
Doesn't sound now and not bring to mind what I tell
But please, the Bravest will do, and no we can't tell you why
Now we're humbled, and yes we are proud, we are the FDNY

Stand in my boots I'm sure you'll agree,
Oh, there is trouble in being called a hero
We'd give it all back to have the three forty three,
The lads lost in the rubble of ground zero
But please, the bravest will do, and no we can't tell you why
Now we're humbled, and yes we are proud, we are the FDNY
Still fourteen thousand strong, we are the FDNY

What's an Old Conscientious Objector to Do?

By William E. Powell, Ph.D., Professor, Social Work Department, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater

This brief narrative provides a first person account of the thoughts and recollections of a social work educator as he meets with his research class during the unfolding events on the morning of 9/11/2001.

Driving home just before sundown on the evening of September 10th, I saw to the east, a complete and perfect rainbow on the horizon. Under the rainbow, the sky was as black as night and above it pure blue. Having never witnessed such a rainbow before, so eerily beautiful, I pulled to the edge of the road and stopped so that I could take it in. The morning of September 11th found the sky azure blue but peppered with clouds like little biscuits. Each cloud wept a trail of snow far below it—very odd for September. I was so taken with the sight that I stood at my window transfixed. The telephone rang and my sister from Indiana yelled, "Turn on the TV quick" and hung up. I turned on the television just as an airliner hit the second of the two World Trade Towers. I watched the coverage for an hour and then rushed off to the University to meet with the first of my two research classes. I wondered if anyone would show up for the class—everyone did.

On the way to campus, I wondered what to say and do in class and thought about the poor souls in those buildings and planes. New events and rumors were still occurring, and I had no idea how much more might happen. I pondered the proper thing to say to students in a moment in time that will remain forever etched in their minds. There must be a special weight to our words when what we say and do together might be with someone forever. Should I talk about research? Or respond to the ongoing events of the morning?

Preparing for any class is not an entirely intellectual process, and this day it was a special mix of feeling and thought and anticipation. What I felt were the distractions of sadness, pain, helplessness, apprehension, and grief. Emotions trigger memories, and my memories reverted to the violence of another time. It was another war that brought me into social work. During the war in Vietnam, I was a conscientious objector, a pacifist. The Selective Service System assigned me to a state hospital in Indiana to do my alternate service for two years. The hospital assigned me to the Social Work Department, and I became a social worker in spite of my objections. Now, thirty plus years later, I am still in social work. Odd, the little twists of fate in life—the changes in one's life course—that can be attributed to a moral repulsion to violence!

In the subsequent seventeen years that I was in practice, I often dealt with the aftermath of violence—as a sexual assault and domestic violence counselor and as a social worker who worked with the terminally ill in a medical setting. Violence and death are not strangers to me. The juxtaposition of my pacifist soul and the focus of my practice on the effects of violence and death certainly affect how and what I teach. When I teach, of necessity I bring my experiences with me. I mention them only sparingly, yet one's memories are part of the lens through which the world and its possibilities are viewed. I can be nothing other than who I have been and who I have become. One's sense of morality, like one's sense of ethics, becomes infused into

one's practice and is part of the perspective from which one teaches.

I am, on my mother's side, the descendent of English Quakers, pacifists, who came to this country three and one-half centuries ago fleeing religious persecution. As a small child, I came to understand that violence is to be deplored. It is a failure of sorts. As a social worker, I have too often seen the effects of violence and injustice firsthand. My Quaker roots tell me that the soul of the poorest orphan in Afghanistan or Africa is the full equal of the soul of any rich man occupying the White House. I am a social worker and still a pacifist.

In the few minutes before my class began, news was still breaking: a plane had crashed in Pennsylvania, rumors of smoke rising from the Capital mall, a tower may have collapsed. No one knew whether there was more to come, or if today's violence was at an end. We knew that more would come-that those who sow the wind reap the whirlwind, that violence begets violence. I went to my class not knowing the majority of the students since it was only the third class of the semester. It was larger than most social work classes; most students are initially more pensive and hesitant in the larger classes. They are particularly pensive in research classes. In spite of not knowing one another well, the previous class sessions had been lively and students had begun to open up in front of one another.

As I walked to class, there was a hush about the campus, and I reminded myself that whatever I would say and do in class must be done mindful of my students' learning and of their futures. I entered the class without an agenda or a prepared speech. I opted to let my mind and heart say and respond as they would and to hear what my students wished to say. I greeted them and asked if there was anything they would like to say or talk about and whether they had already had a chance to talk during the previous class period. Many had eyes welling with tears. One student sarcastically said that she just came from another class and the instructor had gone on with the lesson as if nothing was unusual: "It was weird, it was like nothing was happening!" Another student said her previous class was canceled "...we didn't even have a chance to talk about what's going on." Several say that they have never seen people die in front of their eyes, that "this is not like the movies, people really died as we watched!" I responded, acknowledging that in spite of all the violence in our media, there is something jolting when we know that what appears before our eyes is real and current and will change us all forever. Some students say they are afraid—will we be in a war? What will happen to us? Who else might die? What else is going to happen? Some are angry at those who did the evil. Many are mute and stunned. One young woman simply says, "I love my country so much!" Another says that she thinks her cousin works in the Trade Towers. Others ask how it is that someone could hate us that much and we never knew about it or why.

I responded to their comments and acknowledged that it is the very ignorance of our effects on one another that is a problem, that we are all too often blind to how others see us. I said that acknowledging that we may have been foolishly unaware of the anger of others does not excuse their actions. One student rather angrily says that she believes that we are getting back all the subtle evil that others have done in our name, that corporations and special interests and the government have angered and undermined other cultures and we're all paying for the actions of a few. Her anger seemed as accepted as was the fear of others. My sense was that the opportunity to talk and express emotions in the company of others with whom they shared a major and with whom they had already talked was reassuring. The structure of the classroom brought a little sense of normalcy into an otherwise wildly abnormal day.

After the comments and small discussions faded, it was clear that most couldn't find words to adequately convey the jumble of emotions they were feeling. A room full of young souls were discovering the ineffable. The troubles in articulating strong feelings led to a silence at odds with the previous meeting, where they had begun to chat with one another quite casually. The silence, however, did not seem uncomfortable to them. It seemed time for me to speak, but I felt no great wisdom welling up inside of me.

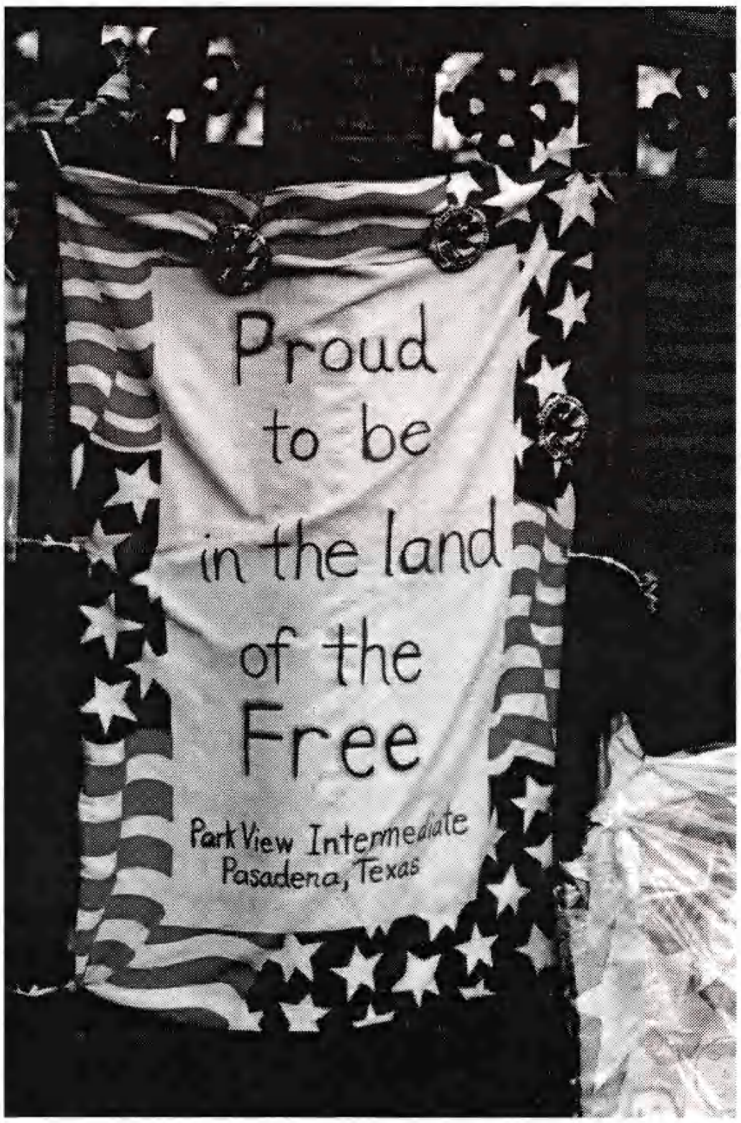
I said that since this was a research class, I hoped we might sometime, when normality returned, think of using research techniques to help us discover and better understand why such events happen. That what research can do is to help us understand how others see the world, how things are correlated. It does help people know how to avoid problems or to work better together. However, the students seemed too distraught by the ongoing events to deal with the rationality of applied research methods. Clearly, they were caught up in the emotionality and import of the moment and the fear of what would happen next. Being with them and hearing the pain in their voices, I was surprised by the unexpected triggering of a recollection of my feelings the moment I heard that President Kennedy was assassinated. I shared with them the power of emotion laden memories on the life courses of people and how the details of things are often etched on our minds until the end of our days. I shared the story of that one such memory for me. I was working in a small dry goods store in Indiana. The ordinariness of that day in 1963 was broken when someone burst in the side door shouting that the president had just been killed. We turned on a radio and heard that it was indeed true. Everyone, staff and customers alike, looked at one another in stunned silence. I remember feeling dazed and frozen in place, immobilized, unable to articulate a coherent thought. An elderly African-American customer softly suggested, "I think we should pray" and she led everyone—customers and staff—silently in prayer. The silence was like the shared presence and silence of a Quaker meeting, and our emotions and concerns bound us together in a way that words could not have. I have rarely felt as connected with others as in the resonance of that most painful of moments. That moment remains with me for life.

I tell my students the story and then talk about the permanence of, the imprinting of, memories in times such as this. I ask if they have called their parents and loved ones. All respond that they have called those whom they hold dear. I suggest that they allow themselves a moment to care about those who died and will die and who suffer. To pay attention to whom you love and what you value, for the thoughts and emotions and memories of this day, like that day of my youth, may be with you forever. I say, "Fill your mind with good thoughts and good wishes and the love of others, of all people, for such memories will be linked with the memories of pain and will always be with you. Do not let your memory of this day be tainted with hatred. Be with others you care about. Look at one another and realize how wonderful, what a gift, life is." "Treat others so that no one will ever dislike us that intensely again. What has happened is evil and what causes such hatred and evil may itself be evil." I say to them that we, as humans, are capable of so much more and in my heart what I most want at that moment is to spare them the pain and fear that they are going through, but I cannot do that. I say that answering violence with violence is no solution and ask them to take care of themselves and, again, to talk with those who love them and to hold dear all those to whom they are connected.

I can conjure up no magic "right words" to quell the fear of unknowns unleashed upon their young worlds. Another bit of innocence in the world has broken away. My voice begins to fail. I thank them for their attention

and our shared presence in such a moment and say, "That is all for class today. We can talk more, or you may leave as you wish." My eyes brim with tears and we stay with one another in silence, in the ineffable, for a few moments, and then they trickle out of class murmuring softly to one another, suddenly looking older than their years. One kind soul comes over and whispers "thank you" as we leave. Outside, the sky is clear blue with no vapor trails dividing it and the hush of an expectant world envelops and holds us. We wait for what is to come.

Class that day was not an exercise in rationality but rather a moment in time when an instructor and his students could gather together, be with one another, in the midst of ongoing catastrophe and terror and uncertainty. It was a time when our common humanity bound us together and a time when we jointly tailored memories that had begun being woven into the various narratives of our lives.



A banner made by school children in Texas at the Ground Zero Memorial

A Social Work Class as Mutual Aid Group: In the Aftermath of September 11th

By Beatrice R. Plasse, DSW, Visiting Assistant Professor,
Fordham University Graduate School of Social Services

During the author's second week of a new teaching assignment, the tragedies of September 11 occurred. In the following days, after evacuating her apartment and volunteering with the Salvation Army, she resumed teaching. In this narrative she shares her reflections about how her students helped each other deal with the turmoil.

Under thy shadow by the piers I waited;
Only in darkness is thy shadow clear.
The city's fiery parcels all undone,
Already snow submerges an iron year...

"To the Brooklyn Bridge," Hart Crane

On September 11th, I awoke full of excitement. It was the second week of my new job as visiting assistant professor. I was thrilled to be teaching social work students on a graduate level. It was the second week for my son at his new college and he was thriving in his guitar studies and performances. After a nervous first day, my daughter was into her third week of her new high school. Last night she'd been singing in the shower and telling my husband and I how much fun school was. My husband was working on a major project and feeling optimistic. I actually remember thinking, "How could my life get any better than this?"

Shortly after 9 a.m., I am alone in my loft apartment in Tribeca. The building shakes suddenly. I run to the living room and see the burning upper floors of the first tower that was hit. I am pacing back and forth, crying, saying "no, no" in a whisper and then as a prayer, "This isn't happening. Please God, don't let this be happening." I am seeing what looks like objects falling. I am seeing people clinging to the building, then jumping. I am hearing the strangest sound I have ever heard; it is like the plopping of water balloons. Absurd, that I remember playing with water balloons on summer days with my friends. But these are the sounds of bodies and parts of human beings. When we leave, I don't know that it will be three weeks before we can move back.

The first class I taught after September 11th was on Thursday, September13th, a foundation course in social justice, oppression, and social work in organizations. I was late for class. I had been with a national guardsman who accompanied my husband and I into our building in order to get a change of clothes. Entering the building was like entering a mineshaft, smoky and dark. By flashlight beams, we climbed ten flights of stairs to our apartment, which was blanketed in a white lunar dust.

I don't remember much about that class. My students were concerned about me. I told them how I had fled my apartment and that my family and I were safe and staying with friends. I was afraid I would break down, that I would not be professional. Just the week before, I had encouraged students not to be afraid of showing clients that they had feelings and cared. I was also aware that I was supposed to be teaching about the history and current realities of de facto and overt race, class, and gender discrimination. This topic was both intensely real and yet also felt obsolete and irrelevant. The distinctions between rich, poor, Asian, Black, and Hispanic working class and professional were erased in the shared sense of our universal vulnerability and mortality in this dangerous new world. I had

seen the leveling of divisions among the people on the lines at the makeshift morgue. On September 12th, I had gone to the Salvation Army and been recruited to work in the medical examiner's office taking missing persons reports and sitting with police officers as they interviewed families. I felt honored to be a social worker.

I know that numbing is one of the first reactions to trauma, and I could see that people were numb as they answered our questions on the missing persons forms or told me their stories. On September 13th the morgue was moved to the armory. I went there with my new Salvation Army badge. People were exhausted; the lines snaked around the block. I thought of the poem "Hope" by Emily Dickinson, in which she describes hope as a feathered thing that perches on the soul. I handed out water and talked to people, asking them how they were doing. I was with people as they went through the new updated lists of names of dead, hospitalized, or missing. I sat with a woman who had identified the body of her brother. I held the hand of a woman who was looking for her son, a boy my son's age. By the end of the day, I could recognize the physical signs of shock. There it was, the feathered thing that perches on the soul, the thing we in social work sometimes call resiliency, the resiliency of hope in the parents who walked from hospital to hospital looking for their daughter, showing her picture and asking "Have you seen this woman?"

On September 15th, four days after the attacks, I was about to teach a social policy class. By then, the numbness had given way to sadness, fear, and moments of feeling intensely alive. I had connected with my family, friends, and others who were trying to help and serve. I was exhausted. I know now that I needed to stop and be with my family, but I was also driven by a need to do something.

My mind was racing. How could I teach this class when I knew that the students were so shaken up? Should I let everyone talk about how they feel? Maybe they just needed to start with how they were healing or hurting. On the other hand, if the students made the effort to get here, didn't they want me to teach a class? Would my teaching make us feel "normal?"

The class is made up of students from all over the world, and the students range from early twenties to middle age. Some have many years of experience, and others are just out of undergraduate school. They have chosen this difficult and rewarding profession in order to be of service to others and to redress injustice; but they never expected to begin their careers as history was being reshaped.

The decision to hold class or not was taken out of my hands. There had been a bomb threat on a crowded subway, and students in the class were on that train which was evacuated at the 59th Street Columbus Circle stop, the stop for Fordham University. People had become so panicked that one of the students had nearly been trampled. I had the class make a circle of their seats as each one of us hugged the student (M) who burst into sobs. She told us that this was the first time she had cried since September 11th; M couldn't cry in front of her mother. She lived in a tough neighborhood in the Bronx, she had lost three brothers in the past five years to the violence of the streets, and her mother needed her to be strong. One of the oldest students, a man who told us his son was in the Marines, got up and began to walk out saying, " I don't want to talk about this." But as he got to the door of the classroom he turned around and came back to sit next to M. I thanked him and, turning to the class, I said that I was torn, too, about what to do. I felt I had a responsibility to teach them since they had taken it upon themselves to come to class, but I also wanted to let them spend as much time as they needed to talk about what had happened. "Could we talk?" Heads nodded in agreement. One woman said that, like M, she had not yet cried and now she was

not sure she could focus on anything but her need to let herself weep. Tissues were passed around and most of the students were wiping their eyes.

The windows of the classroom are high above Columbus Avenue, a busy city street. We heard sirens below and helicopters above. Sounds we would have ignored, like the thud of the elevator doors, made some of us jump. One by one students began to tell where they were when the attacks occurred. The next piece of information they wanted to share was how helpless they felt and how much they wanted to do something constructive. The student who had returned to his seat said he was full of anger. All he could think about was getting into a plane with a bomb to "push the button." Other students shook their heads in what seemed like disapproval mixed with understanding. I asked this student how different that would be from flying a plane into a building. A student from Nigeria, who had been in the United States for several years, began to speak about massacres by terrorists in her country. She had come to the United States in part to escape the bloodshed between Moslems and Christians. She felt that we Americans were naive and characterized Moslems as wanting only one thing: to destroy all of us. A student replied saying that hearing this frightened her because she lived in an area of Brooklyn where Moslem families were being beaten up and windows broken in the shops owned by Moslems. This was her neighborhood, not Nigeria, not the Middle East, where for as long as she remembered everyone had gotten along.

A silence, and then one of the students, a young woman with an Arabic name and the physical features of someone from the Middle East, spoke up. She told the class that she was born in the United States and her parents were born in Egypt. Her family were assimilated into American life but belonged to a mosque, and their holy book was the Koran. She was as hurt as anyone else in the class. She insisted that the people who committed the acts of terror were not Islamic; they were a sect calling themselves Islamic. She was offended by the remarks of the Nigerian student and hoped that she could come here to school and feel safe. She had not been treated differently than any other American since the attack, but she was becoming afraid for her seven-year-old son who might encounter these attitudes at his school in Queens. I asked the class how we could help this student feel safe as well as help each other feel safe. The Nigerian student got up and gave her name and telephone number to the Moslem student. I suggested that we pass the sheet of paper around and all who wished could write down their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses.

One of the last students to speak was a woman who had been on 24-hour call with an emergency rescue group that was part of a victim's services agency. I asked her how much sleep she had gotten. This was the fourth day since the attacks and she said she had averaged between two and four hours a night for the past three nights. She felt she could not stop moving. She wanted to cry, but she just couldn't. I asked the class to tell her how this made them feel. Some students said they admired her, and some said they were amazed that she could be so strong. One of the male students told her that if the men in the class could cry, then surely there was nothing to be ashamed of by crying. The student said that her mother, with whom she lived, was the only person she could feel safe crying in front of, but since the attacks her mother was riveted to the television and would only talk angrily about the attacks. The student found her mother's tirades so grating that she kept her distance, going straight to bed but not falling asleep. Was her mother stopping her from expressing her fears and hurt?

I suggested we do a role play and she would be her mother and I would be she. I said words to the effect, "Mom, look at me, I

understand how angry you are, but I'm exhausted and I need you to help me out. If I don't talk to you about what I'm going through, I am not going to be able to help anyone and I need your help now." But the student dismissed my words with a wave of her hand and said she couldn't speak that way to her mother. I turned to the class for help. Several people asked if this student had really tried to speak to her mother or if she wasn't perhaps avoiding her feelings and blaming her mother. They asked, "Did you tell your mother to look at you and to listen to you?" The student became thoughtful for a moment and then said that she was afraid; maybe if she did express her pain, she wouldn't be able to gather her strength to go out for another 12-hour shift. One of the students asked what would happen if she just called and said she needed a break? Would she lose her job? Wouldn't her agency understand?

I looked at the clock and saw that there were only ten minutes left. We had been talking for ninety minutes. A student who had been in tears earlier spoke to us. She said that she had been holding onto a happy feeling and did not want to let anything take it away. The previous day she had learned that she was pregnant. At that, the class broke into applause and smiles. I asked the students if they would hold hands in a circle for a moment before class ended. But the students did not want me to end the class until I talked about myself. Actually, I needed to talk just as much as they did. I told them that I had been living with friends and how we had to evacuate our apartment. I told them that I saw from my window what the world saw from their television screens, but this view was close up and contained unspeakable images that I know I will never fully erase from my memory and that I hope will never be seen by children or by the families of those who perished. I told them that in the days after the attack on the WTC, my colleagues at Fordham and I worked with agencies such as the Red Cross and that I was a volunteer with the Salvation Army.

In the coming weeks, I would be covering the topic of mutual aid groups in this class. Had I planned it as a teaching exercise, I could not imagine a better illustration of the "powerful healing force" of a group (Gitterman & Shulman, 1994). I felt their caring and support as I spoke.

At the time of this writing, we have had one other class. It is still early in the semester and I usually do a lot of lecturing from my notes. But, I didn't get very far. Discussions were lively. Students brought in web site information and a news article about the outpouring of social welfare for the families affected by the disaster. The student who was in the subway during the bomb scare has arranged to get a ride every week with the man who spoke about getting on a plane with a bomb. The Moslem woman was absent from the class, but I hope to see her at the next class.

Reference

• Gitterman, A., & Shulman, L., (1994). Mutual aid, oppression, and the mediating function. In A. Gitterman & L. Shulman (Eds). *Mutual Aid Groups: Vulnerable Populations and the Life Cycle* (2nd Ed.), pp. 3-26, New York: Columbia University Press.

Reflections about Shadow Victims of 911

By Michelle S. Ballan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Columbia University School of Social Work

This narrative chronicles the events which led to the development of the nation's first organized student effort to provide financial resources and support for the shadow victims of the attacks on America: the 2,500 people who face both the trauma of memory and the challenge of newly acquired disabilities.

There is a moment in each of our lives when time stands still. When the world around you and the individuals standing beside you cease to exist. No sound can be heard despite the continuous ringing of a phone or shouting from a great mass of people. Time stood still for me at 8:10 a.m. on September 11th, 2001. I wasn't standing on the streets of New York City nor beside the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Instead, I was inside an orthopedist's waiting room, pondering how to deliver a three-hour lecture while standing on a fractured ankle. Hobbling to the front desk, I turned to glance at the image captivating university students and the receptionist. Feeling perturbed at that moment, as no one afforded my temporarily disabled status special attention, my eyes fell upon the television screen. I am unsure how long I stared at the surreal vision before turning away, only to have the image of gaping holes in the World Trade Center Towers become a snapshot forever imprinted in my mind, forever in American history.

As the world watched the horrifying footage of America under attack, how, why and who served as repeated utterances. How could this happen in the United States? Why would anyone do this to innocent people? Who could possibly survive this tragedy? I, too, asked how, why, and who, yet my questions differed slightly. Within hours, I no longer wondered how this could happen in the United States; instead, I inquired, "How can I help my current undergraduate students to learn from this senseless tragedy?" and "Why am I compelled to focus on the survivors?" These two queries led me to focus my attention towards one simple question: "Who will be the shadow victims of this tragedy?"

Standing before a class composed of bewildered, anxious students on September 12th, I posed the question aloud, "Who will be the shadow victims of this tragedy?" Responses included blue-collar workers, unborn children whose fathers were killed, siblings of the deceased, hostages on the planes, and the families of firefighters. All were possible victims who might be forgotten. Sadly, the shadow victims would be the population whom I had dedicated my work towards for the past ten years. But was it too early in the semester of this particular class, having met only once before, to expect my students to understand? Maybe it wasn't too early. I looked at my students and asked, "Would it be okay if I sat to teach this evening's course? When I place pressure on my ankle, the cast rubs. This is only a temporary disability. I know in six weeks, my ankle will have fully recovered. How does my temporary disability differ from the definition of developmental disability that we discussed last week?" Students glanced at the pages of their syllabus, searching for the definition of a developmental disability. Finally, a student read to the class the qualifying factors distinguishing a developmental disability from a temporary disability. The young woman sitting beside her then queried, "Would people in the World Trade

Center incident who become disabled be labeled developmentally disabled, even if they are over the age of 22?" My response, "No they will be labeled the shadow victims of 9/11."

Shadow victims of the September 11th tragic events are the estimated 2,500 individuals who face both the trauma of memory and the challenge of newly acquired disabilities, including paralysis, burns, and hearing loss. These lesser known victims and the lack of media attention directed towards them became the focus of our class that evening and a segment of each Wednesday night class for the remaining 12 weeks of the course. The World Trade Center tragedy afforded me the rare opportunity to utilize a national event to combine the philosophy of the Introduction to Developmental Disabilities course with a call for unification towards public service and civic involvement among college students.

Each semester, a component of the Introduction to Developmental Disabilities course centers on the formulation and execution of a community service project. Students receive no credit for their participation in designing or implementing the project; the pledge of community work serves as a mere introduction to the level of volunteerism and professional service necessary when one commits to the social work profession. The students in this fall 2001 class elected to focus their service project towards helping victims who became disabled from the tragic events of September 11th. This narrative will chronicle the events that led to the development of the nation's first organized effort to raise societal awareness of the impact of disability on survivors and to provide financial resources and support for these shadow victims of the attacks.

The weeks following September 12th addressed educational and organizational frameworks for the students enrolled in the course, the majority of whom were non social work majors. Students possessed minimal knowledge pertaining to the disability community and lacked familiarity with the nonprofit sector, two necessary components to raising societal awareness and monetary funds. The course was designed to enhance the students' understanding and knowledge of the unique issues impacting the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. The course content is derived from the philosophy of humanization, an ideology based on the principles of individual worth and uniqueness and the concomitant rights of individuals with disabilities. The course places disability in a political, social, cultural, and economic context to increase awareness and understanding of the needs of and societal barriers impacting individuals with disabilities throughout their life cycle.

During the weeks following our national tragedy, students learned that people with disabilities comprise an estimated 48.9 million individuals or 19.4% of the nation's population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990; McNeil, 1993). Students recognized that every individual is susceptible to becoming temporarily or permanently disabled due to environmental and biomedical factors. Estimates suggest that one out of every three people will acquire a disability at some time during his or her life (NASW, 1994), a statistic that brings disability to the forefront as an emergent majority group. Disability may intrude suddenly and traumatically, as in the case of spinal cord injury following an accident, or appear slowly and subtly, as with the disabling effects of multiple sclerosis.

To understand the needs facing individuals who became disabled from the September 11th attacks, the course focused on the adjustment to a disability. Although the impact of a disability on an individual's life can create physical, psychological, social, vocational, and economic effects (Livneh, 1991), the type and severity of a disability are never the sole determinants of a person's ability to adjust (Robinson, West & Woodworth,

1995). The response to disability is dependent on several variables including environmental and social, in addition to the psychological characteristics of the respondent (Marinelli & Dell Orto, 1991). As a person struggles with a new and increased awareness of the impact of a physical or mental impairment and its accompanying stigma, he or she faces a readjustment or loss of past skills, knowledge, outlook, goals, dreams, and relationships. The loss/change process is a useful way of viewing the emotional states precipitated by the transition. Feelings and emotions vary in intensity, duration, and sequence, specifically when the onset is unexpected and occurs due to a violent and criminal act, such as a terrorist attack.

In order for students to truly understand the many unmet needs of individuals with disabilities, we examined the problems faced by New York City residents who were disabled prior to the World Trade Center attacks. Due to safety concerns, individuals who resided in downtown Manhattan were forbidden to return to their residences following the destruction of the towers. While many New York residents stayed with friends or family, several individuals with physical disabilities were unable to stay at relatives' apartments due to the inaccessibility of many New York buildings. Additionally, these individuals were also turned away from shelters and forced to stay at hotels they may have been unable to afford because the shelters or beds were also inaccessible. Personal assistants were denied access to various buildings or transportation routes, rendering many individuals with disabilities without personal care services such as toileting assistance, meal preparation, and medication disbursement. Food stamp cards ceased to work, leaving some individuals with disabilities without food. Federal agencies established hotlines that failed to list TTY/TTD numbers, preventing deaf individuals from obtaining services and information. Many companies lacked evacuation plans to assist people with disabilities to safely exit buildings, forcing them to be left behind or separated from their mobility equipment. The problems were myriad since disaster relief efforts often fail to attend to the needs of the disability community. Course content examined such aforementioned societal barriers, which prevent individuals with disabilities from acquiring the same information and resources as the nondisabled.

With heightened awareness of the needs of the disability community, students pursued the formulation of a service project with enthusiasm and an infinite sense of wisdom and sensitivity. Students explored the following questions: What service project should be implemented to maximize resources and meet the greatest need for these survivors and their families? Should the project be limited to current students only or should former students be invited to participate? Should we form a student organization? What type of fundraiser did we want to develop? Whom should we target to solicit donations? What would be our mission? What agency would disburse the funds acquired? After several weeks of classroom and e-mail discussions, over two hundred of my current and former students assembled to form United for WTC Victims with Disabilities.

United for WTC Victims with Disabilities is a university sponsored student organization. As the faculty advisor, I attended numerous mandated meetings to learn how to transform our far-reaching vision into a successful student organization. We decided to pursue official status as "university sponsored," thus permitting the organization to fundraise on campus and to utilize trademark university logos and letterhead. Following the organization's incorporation, the majority of student members gathered daily over the course of a three-week period. During this time, students received an introduction to the nonprofit world. Topics addressed included adopting a philosophy and mission statement,

formalizing committee structures, developing of a strategic fundraising plan, and an examination of possible repositories for funds raised. We attended to each of the aforementioned tasks efficiently and expediently. The organization was able to move forward with minimal controversy, despite our large size. Our immediate progress was due to the establishment of a systematic approach for decision making, the adoption of rules for governance, and a clearly defined mission statement and short-term vision.

Our next step as an organization was to explore the continuum of unique fundraising activities proposed. We opted to create a "donation committee." The committee succeeded in acquiring gifts from various community vendors for 10,000 paper cutouts of hands, 25 banners, unlimited reams of paper, easels, organization signs, tape, and money boxes, thereby enabling us to implement the fundraiser "United We Sit and Stand." Donors receive a construction paper cutout of either a hand or wheelchair symbol in red, white, or blue for donations from $1 to $5. Donors are able to write a message to be sent to victims with disabilities. The hands, which spell messages of encouragement in sign language, and wheelchair cutouts are affixed to large banners and will be presented to victims currently in or recently discharged from rehabilitation centers in the New York City area.

In addition to individual donations, we sought corporate sponsors from companies currently employing people with disabilities, hoping that this would lead the way for businesses in New York to acknowledge how valuable employees with disabilities are. The "corporate committee" researched companies employing people with disabilities and sent letters congratulating them on valuing diversity in the workplace in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Companies wishing to donate $100 received a small gold star; for $500 they received a larger gold star that was affixed to the banners. "Star companies" are an important part of the message to the victims with disabilities, many temporarily displaced from employment.

We are hopeful that the fundraiser will raise disability awareness and demonstrate social work's commitment to people with disabilities. At each fundraising event, flyers are disseminated describing the impact of disability on individuals and their families and listing countless ways that citizens can work to reduce the barriers to full societal integration and acceptance of people with disabilities. The flyers also portray the story of Abe Zelmanowitz, a nondisabled man, and Ed Beyea, a quadriplegic, friends who died side by side on the 27th Floor of Tower 1 of the World Trade Center. Mr. Zelmanowitz refused to leave Mr. Beyea, when it became apparent that the elevators were not operational. Mr. Beyea was unable to be transported without the use of his electric wheelchair. The fundraiser commemorates their friendship.

After careful consideration and much research, the members selected the Heightened Independence and Progress Center for Independent Living (HIPCIL) as the repository for funds raised. The "funds committee" established guidelines for monetary disbursements by the agency to people with newly acquired disabilities. HIPCIL is a nonprofit agency that has been assisting individuals with disabilities displaced from their homes due to the tragedy. This organization is the main conduit for resources and counseling for individuals who were disabled by the attacks. At present, we are continuing to raise monies to address the unmet financial needs of these individuals.

The media hype centered on the World Trade Center tragedy may have lessened and the images may begin to subside, but students' commitment to public service is renewed with an energy and level of determinism that en-

ables me to envision a truly integrated society for people with and without disabilities. The events of September 11, 2001, continue to have far-reaching effects on Americans and on the American way of life. For today's college students, this is their first experience not only of a tragedy of this magnitude but of one with such serious implications for their future. Members of United for WTC Victims with Disabilities have recently formulated a long-term vision for the future of the organization. It has been decided that the student organization will undergo a yearly name change to attend to the most recent national or international incident affording individuals the status of "disabled." Some disabilities, like a fractured ankle, will be temporary and have healed long ago; others will be life long or life ending.

My hope is that students recognize that their dedication and commitment to individuals with newly acquired disabilities through fundraising efforts and increasing awareness among the non-disabled achieve an important goal: the reduction of societal barriers. Obtaining funds helps to address the unmet needs for adaptive equipment or accessible transportation, the lack of which prevents a newly disabled individual from being independent. Heightened awareness of disability among persons who are non-disabled leads to a reduction in the negative stereotypes and perceptions of people with disabilities. Together, through awareness and financial assistance, there is the possibility that the breakdown of barriers can lead to a truly accessible and integrated society. Maybe then there will no longer be a need for the question: "Who will be the shadow victims of this tragedy?"

References

• Livneh, H. (1991). A unified approach to existing models of adaptation to disability: A model of adaptation. In R. P. Marinelli & A. E. Dell Orto (Eds.), *The Psychological and Social Impact of Disability* (3rd ed., pp.111-138). New York: Springer.

• Marinelli, R. P., & Dell Orto, A. E. (Eds.). (1991). *The Psychological & Social Impact of Disability* (3rd ed.). New York: Springer.

• McNeil, J. M. (1993). Americans with disabilities:1991-1992. In U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports* (pp.7-33). Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office.

• National Association of Social Workers (1994). People with disabilities. In *Social Work Speaks: NASW Policy Statements* (3rd ed., pp. 206-210). Washington, DC: NASW Press.

• Robinson, F. M., Jr., West, D., & Woodworth, D. Jr. (1995). *Coping Plus Dimensions of Disability.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

• U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990). *1990 Census of Population and Housing: PL94-171 Data.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce.

Reflections From a Social Work Faculty on 9/11

Editor's note: These last four reflections about the impact of 9/11 were written by the director and three faculty members of a Social Work department on the West coast. Faculty were invited to write about the impact of 9/11 on their social work classes after the social work faculty and students met together for two days to share their grief and pain over the tragedies in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania.

The Loneliness of an Administrator in a Crisis Situation

By John Oliver, Ph.D., Director,
Department of Social Work, California
State University, Long Beach

Early in the morning on September 11th, the telephone rang. My first thoughts were that this was probably one of my daughters or a grandchild needing transportation to or from one of their varied activities. On this day, however, while my assumption was correct (it was indeed my daughter); her reason for calling was unfathomable. "Daddy, daddy," she screamed, "turn on the TV, someone has crashed an airplane into the World Trade Center." Without replying, I quietly turned on a TV. My daughter and I continued talking about what we were seeing with both of us expressing dismay and profound sadness as news reporters provided preliminary numbers on human carnage. Before hanging up, I asked her to call her sister to see if she was aware of the event. I reminded her to call me, if my wife or I might be of assistance in helping them to process this tragic event.

My wife and I sat in our den transfixed. As we permitted ourselves to be bombarded by one horrifying image after another for more than one hour, it suddenly occurred to me that this was the morning for our field education laboratory. The field lab is designed to provide students with a review of policies, procedures and practicum expectations. It is also constructed as a forum for students to download anxiety, and to get answers for pressing questions prior to their first day of field. My role in the lab is twofold. One, I'm supposed to review the profession's values and ethical standards, and two, I am entrusted with the task of motivating and inspiring them about the prospect of rendering professional social work services.

Checking my clock I noticed that it was 7:45 am and the lab was slated to begin at 8:30 am. I quickly showered and hurriedly dressed. I was becoming increasingly concerned that over 200 of my students were assembled in an auditorium awash with horrifying images, which for most of them were devoid of a context that could provide meaning. A growing sense of the necessity to be with my students became a singular objective.

When I arrived on campus, I quickly walked the halls where faculty offices are located to determine if colleagues needed assistance. I was unsure as to what I would do to help, but I was hoping that my presence would in some way be reassuring. The faculty offices and hallways would have normally been bustling with activity at this time of the morning. This was not the case. There was an eerie quietness. The atypical stillness was punctuated by flickers of morning sunlight and distance muffled sounds superimposing a surreal quality on a departmental atmosphere characterized by warmth and friendliness.

I remember thinking, "What should I do? Should I call a special faculty meeting so that we might share and discuss our fears, con-

cerns and apprehensions?" "No, no," my inner voice replied. "We should adhere to our vision of students as equal partners, even in time of challenge. We should cancel all classes and call a faculty/student assembly." As I sorted through what felt like endless ideas on how I should respond, a solution never emerged. Competing cognitions about war, societal irreverence toward life, in particular certain lives, and other unresolved socio-historical feelings of social betrayal, unabridged brutality and acceptance of personal insecurity as normal, demanded equal consideration.

Confused and anxious I headed toward the student union, the location of the field education program. The one hundred yard walk from our building to the union seemed to take an eternity. On my walk to the union, I deeply sensed being alone. I remember reflecting on my father and his seemingly uncanny sense of always knowing what to do in troubling situations, and his ability to always summon the courage to do what had to be done. I remember praying and asking daddy to be with me.

When I arrived at the auditorium, the venue was dimly lit and students and faculty were somber and very quiet. I was approached by our Director of Field Education who asked me, "What should we do?" I don't remember what I said, but I'm certain that it was extremely tentative. I was slowly succumbing to the weight of the moment. Unable to reflect on my thoughts, a quick introduction propelled me into the limelight, "Here now is the Director of the Department of Social Work, John Oliver."

I slowly walked to the front of the assembled students and stood there teary eyed and speechless. When my tears receded, my voice returned. In a deliberate and quiet tone, I began by summarizing the factual data related to the tragedy. I then discussed our profession's reverence for life, our commitment to social justice, and our collaborative responsibility toward one another. I told them that I needed their support, guidance and love, because I was unsure as to what I should do at this moment. I shared my concerns for families who lost loved ones, and my personal guilt, shame and confusion around the mass of conflicting ideas and emotions that had "welled up" inside me. I invited to them to turn to colleagues for support, and to openly share their concerns and apprehensions.

Many of the students willingly spoke of not knowing if relatives had been killed. Students cried openly and were comforted by classmates and faculty. The assembly was told that they would be joined by other faculty that would help them to process their feelings regarding the tragedy. The assemblage was eventually divided into self-selected groups, joined by faculty, and together they collectively talked, cried and supported one another.

The insights directly related to the morning of 9/11 are numerous. Although I am an experienced administrator, this made me more aware of the range of tasks associated with leadership. It also made me more aware of the necessity of a common vision to provide meaning and stability in the face of unexpected challenges. The morning of 9/11 also deepened my beliefs in the validity of our collaborative learning environment. We treat all students, faculty and staff as stakeholders. General principles of information sharing, inclusion, maximum autonomy and participatory governance are hallmarks of daily activities. In retrospect, these departmental building blocks facilitate the ease with which student and faculty bonded to transverse this emotional and tragic moment in our history.

On a personal note, a basic lesson learned from my parents was reaffirmed. As mother and daddy would say, "Always be yourself. If you are genuine and sincere, and your motivation is to be of help, those in need will always receive your help and will help you in return." What their teaching suggests is that when you are unsure, use of your genuine,

authentic self is a useful interim response.

Crisis situations test administrators in new and novel ways. This is particularly true of a crisis generated as a consequence of atypical circumstances. 9/11 was such an event. In retrospect, I have asked myself repeatedly if my actions were sufficient. Did I react quickly enough? Were my interventions personable and did I help my students, faculty and staff to feel that their concerns and anxieties were cared about? While I'm not sure that I utilized my leadership skills in ways that significantly impacted their challenge, I am certain that they know I care about their well being.

Faculty Narratives of Post 9/11 Responses

The faculty responded to 9/11 by immediately identifying various ways in which we might infuse our collaborative learning environment with opportunities to mediate the side effects of the tragedy. The article by Professor Lee reflects one nuance of the department's collaborative response to 9/11. This event left most of us wondering how we might be helpful in mediating the myriad consequences of these acts of terrorism. As a department, we decided to sponsor two community wide dialogs, and organize a school-based NASW unit that focused on developing a closer relationship between the university, student and community. It was anticipated that such a unit could lend an uncompromised local voice for equity and social justice. Professor Lee's narrative provided a detailed account of this post 9/11 outcome.

Professor Philip Tan's reflection of his post 9/11 classroom experience is also an outgrowth of our commitment to collaborative approaches to developing a learning community. At the end of the semester, his students were invited to reflect on how 9/11 might have impacted their lives. His summary of their thoughts reflects their needs and willingness to share concerns about the tragedy; the scope and depth of the exposed feelings could have only surfaced in an inclusive and supportive environment. Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of his paper is the explanation of his personal experience of the event. In light of select efforts to cast the expression of certain points of view as un-American or unpatriotic, I applaud his willingness to explain how his culture and formative experiences generated feelings and explanations of 9/11 that are quite different from those of many persons born and reared in the United States. This information most likely proved to be quite valuable for our students by stimulating opportunities for discussion, reflection and critical thinking.

The paper by Paul Abels depicts the range of student concerns and emotions about the event. His paper also aptly demonstrates how narratives might be used to place painful experiences in context by freezing their momentum long enough to analyze and gain insights from them. Narratives are also a means of maximizing individual autonomy and personalization of events, free of external ties that might hinder the emergence of buried feelings and emotions.

Creating an NASW Unit After 9/11

By Cheryl D. Lee, Ph.D.

The shock, pain, and sorrow felt by those in New York, Washington or other locales who witnessed the destruction or lost close family or friends because of September 11 seem incomprehensible to me. Even though I was far from the site of the tragedy, there was a palpable change in me and in my interactions with students and colleagues. This narrative describes my own experience as a faculty member at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) and the creation of a new unit of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) on our campus.

I had actually considered forming an

NASW unit long before Sept 11 because Los Angeles County is so large that it would take an hour or more for people in Long Beach to get to the closest NASW meeting. Prior to September 11, I had been to an interesting meeting in a neighboring county. Ironically, it had been about disaster training. I left puzzled by why we did not have an NASW unit in our local community, which is a fairly large city in Southern California and noted for its diverse population. Long Beach is its own community and social workers should have a place to get together and do good things. Over the years, I had attended several NASW meetings in Arizona but felt they were cliquish, run by a few entrenched people, and it was hard to fit in. I knew that if I ever started a unit, I wanted it to be open, welcoming, fun, and with important roles available for everyone to take on.

Community service is a requirement of tenure track faculty. As a new faculty member at CSULB, I was having some trouble getting on a college or university committee. I realized that starting a unit could be a great way to do meaningful community service. Most of my colleagues were discouraging. They said, "Wait until you have tenure," "It's going to be too much work," and "We had one here and no one came." The department's director, John Oliver, encouraged me by saying, "Go for it, it's not that hard to get a unit started. It will be a contribution to our department and our community, and I'll support it." Being a group worker and long time community organizer, I knew I could not do this alone and was not quite sure when to take on this project. I wrote to a community organization professor and asked if a group of students wanted to help me start a unit in Long Beach as their required community project.[1]

On September 10, I taught my second group work class and left to drive to the airport to catch a midnight plane to Florida to see my 87-year-old father and then to go on to a technology conference in South Carolina. At 8:45 on the morning of September 11, I landed at the Fort Lauderdale Airport. On the way to my dad's, while listening to the radio, I learned of the attacks on the World Trade Center and that airports were closing. I could not leave Florida because the planes were grounded. I spent extra days glued to the television and talked with my wise father, a proud World War II Veteran who had participated in the Normandy Invasion. He said the 9/11 attack was serious and he was worried about the future of the world. This conversation upset me because he never seemed fazed by most world events. He seemed to think this event was going to affect all of us.

At the end of the week, I flew back to California, never having made it to the technology conference. My students, colleagues, and sons were happy that I made it back safely, and I was happy to be home. Later, I found out that the undergraduate social work students who knew about my trip were worried about me. One student, Cathy[2], confided, "After the university closed that day, I went home to my tiny apartment and crawled in bed full of anxiety and fear." Mary shouted, "I felt as if I was living through the Northridge Earthquake again and was overwhelmed with feelings of stress."

My group work class, consisting of 12 graduate students in our Older Adults and Family concentration, still reeled from the events of September 11 several weeks later. One student, a wife and mother of several children, was nervous about leaving her family and driving several hours to our campus. Everyone was a bit more edgy than usual, including me. I realized that I was numb about students' meetings of deadlines. It did not seem worth getting upset about small things like wanting an extension on a paper, and the students seemed more tense, especially if other crises were in their lives. In our group work class, we gave support and comfort to each other. I had a vision of the class as a safe environment in which to deal with diffi-

cult times and to receive comfort from each other. There was no need to lecture on mutual aid.

In early October, students started facilitating groups in the class. The first group experience was hilarious. The two student facilitators wanted us older adults to reminisce about the meaning of bread in our lives. I took on the role of my father, Sam, and explained all about challah, the traditional bread eaten on the Jewish Sabbath and other holidays and what it meant in my family. Another student played an older Mexican client who talked about the virtues of tortillas. The two old men fought with each other about the superiority of their bread and everyone was laughing. The facilitators were dismayed because the group was out of control with laughter. They thought something was wrong with their facilitation; rather, it seemed to me that it was just great to be laughing in class after the tense feelings in the aftermath of September 11.

After September 11, I viewed the NASW unit as even more important. We needed a unit in place to deal not only with 9/11 but also with the obvious changes, threats, and anxieties that the future might bring. I could not wait for someone else to do it. The changing landscape of our lives required a new commitment to our profession.

I worked with the four students from the community projects class to initiate the NASW unit. Our first meeting had been scheduled for the week that I returned after September 11. The students came to my office and I introduced myself and asked how they were doing since September 11. One of them burst into tears. After she regained her composure, she explained that she had been very depressed since then. It provoked memories of when her family was living in the South Pacific where several crises had occurred. Her father had been called up from military retirement to help train soldiers for the Persian Gulf War. He left for South Carolina, and she worried that he wouldn't return. He did return, but died from other causes several months later. It also brought back memories of how frightened she was because of the hurricanes on the island when her family had to evacuate their home due to mud slides. Since September 11, she felt as if the world were ending. Why even bother with school? Her grandmother was sick in Mexico, and her mother left to be with her. She feared that she would not see her mother again due to current world events. Being an only child, she felt that she had no family here in this time of turbulence. Another student was the oldest of many siblings and she was worried about their safety and future. They expressed gratitude at my merely asking how they were doing since September 11, and I was stunned that just asking this question meant so much to them.

We then discussed some reasons for the formation of an NASW unit and what steps needed to be taken. They had decided to do this community project (a class assignment of all CSULB MSW students) because they thought it had potential to change our community far into the future. They wanted to be part of starting and shaping this unit. Yvette explained, "My vision is that it would be a place to go to gain support and to intermingle with more experienced social workers and professors in a different way than the classroom could provide." I was happy to have their help. I thought these students would be able to inspire the faculty who were skeptical, and to bring in members from their own circles of friends among students, faculty, and community members. They made a presentation during our faculty meeting, and everyone became more enthusiastic about this unit when they saw the energy of these four students.

Mark, one of the students in the group work class, thought that we should get together as a department to discuss the meaning of the events of September 11. I encouraged him to talk to our director as I knew

that plans were underway for some sort of activity. A group of faculty, students, and community members planned a half-day conference to dialogue about September 11 in early December. The conference was entitled "Searching for Meaning in Difficult Times." It was agreed that the new NASW unit would be initiated at the end of this conference.

The dialogue was very serious at this conference and was facilitated by two experts on our faculty in conflict resolution, Susan Rice and Rene Castro, community activists. There were participants who stated they wanted peace at all costs, and there were mothers and brothers of people in the U.S. military who supported the war effort. There were participants who themselves had been discriminated against since September 11, and there were those who pointed out that they are discriminated against daily due to their skin color and September 11 was no big deal. Several faculty and students were tearful—still in a quandary about what was wrong in the world. There were some heated discussions about the Arab-Israeli conflict in the small breakout groups. A follow-up session was planned for the spring because it was clear that more discussion needed to take place.

At the end of the conference we ate lunch and had a meeting to kick off the new NASW unit with about 50 prospective members in attendance. Although people seemed drained by the morning dialogue, the unit meeting seemed to offer them hope. I introduced the new unit as a place to figure out things together during these difficult times. The four students who helped initiate the unit facilitated brainstorming about what future members hoped to accomplish with this unit. One faculty member said she hoped the unit would be a grass roots group for political change that would help guide the higher-level state and national organization of NASW. She indicated that she hoped social workers would become more involved and active in promoting social justice during these difficult times. Another faculty member said the most important reason for the local unit is to offer support to each other as social workers. Students wanted to have a chance to network and meet professional social workers. Others wanted to receive education regarding current legislation affecting communities that social workers serve. I wanted to dialogue about international and local issues to help gain perspective and to do meaningful projects related to the aftermath of September 11. Some of my colleagues wanted training on clinical interventions. And so the Long Beach unit of NASW was born. The NASW region in Los Angeles sponsored a holiday party in our area to celebrate the rebirth of this new unit.

I became the chair of our local NASW unit and am still learning what that means. I asked Chauncey Alexander to speak at our first official meeting about "Why Be a Member of NASW and the Historical Context of NASW." Chauncey was a former National Executive Director of NASW, had been a leader in the International Association of Social Workers, and was an esteemed former university professor at CSULB. My worries about attendance were unfounded, and Chauncey spoke to a full house of students, faculty and community members. I was worried how the audience would like the vignettes about his lifetime experiences with NASW. The audience was easily able to recognize his treasures, as was I. He told us to persevere in the face of all the odds against social justice. He said that was more important now than ever in the aftermath of September 11. People of different ethnicities were being profiled as terrorists and would need support. He told us to get involved in social work organizations such as NASW and that we would never regret our involvement. We could accomplish a lot more as a group or an organization. He told us to always be prepared when trying to accomplish important things. Like

my father, this wise social worker made it clear that we were living in very troubled times.

Since this meeting there have been four additional Long Beach NASW unit meetings. Each meeting related in some way to September 11 and forwarded the goals of the unit to support social workers, to gain a better understanding of our community, and to make the world a better place. Speakers led discussions of social work issues in Lithuania, Turkey, Iran, India, South Africa, India, Rumania, Singapore, Cambodia, Israel, Egypt, and Hungary. The focus of one meeting was on our own community of Long Beach and its problems related to housing, health, gangs, education, and poverty. We had a wine and cheese party to celebrate social work month. We got to know each other through small group discussions and made plans for future meetings and projects. Our attendance has far exceeded expectations. We average 45 people at each meeting and our membership list is growing. Members of the unit's board, which is open to anyone who wants to join, have been angels: setting up the room, making flyers, bringing refreshments, planning agendas, arranging for speakers, and cleaning up.

I know that we are living in difficult and different times. As an American Jew, I find reading about the Arab-Israeli war and suicide bombings very painful, and my edginess has not really subsided. My current students seem a bit more focused on their studies than the ones I taught right after 9/11, but I know that this focus can easily be disrupted. Being gentle and supportive of each other rather than being petty and judgmental seems for me the most important lessons of 9/11. Our baby NASW unit is growing into a full-fledged toddler, and it will be exciting to nurture its growth so that it can be a support to social workers and oppressed populations in our community and in the world. The community projects students and I learned that we cannot delay our professional goals and that we can make a difference with help from our fellow social workers.

[1] Loretta Gonzalez, Maria Sevilla, Esther Vega, and Roxanne Weiner were the four MSW students who helped create the Long Beach NASW Unit.

[2] Pseudonyms were used in the quotes from students.

End of the Semester Class Reflections on September 11, 2001

By P. Philip Tan

Introduction

It is hard for me to respond to the events of September 11. When I do, I feel that I am out of sync with other people. Thousands of innocent people have died and many more suffered. Lives have been disrupted here in the United States and around the world. It is perhaps that I am an immigrant to the United States and was born and raised in South-East Asia that I look at September 11 differently. When I was growing up, neighboring Indochinese countries were embroiled in political and ideological wars and their people were suffering. Foreign and dominant world powers, including the United States, were involved. Though I did not experience war, I was constantly reminded by the media of the bloodshed, violence, and injustice associated with it. Thus, the attacks of September 11 did not shock me drastically nor have they changed my view of the world much.

In the fall of 2001, I was assigned to teach a course on Wednesday evenings. The attacks of September 11 occurred on the morning of the third Tuesday of that semester. On the evening of the 12th, my class of 27 students met as usual. The difference was that there was an uneasiness among them; much more than I had expected. For the first part of that class I encouraged them to express

their feelings. The students indicated that they were sad, some were distressed, but they all seemed perplexed. They were relieved to be unharmed, however, too many innocent lives had been destroyed. Most of all, the attacks were unprecedented in their lifetime and were unimaginable to most.

As the weeks slowly passed the circumstance and extent of the attacks were better understood. By the end of that semester, the United States was engaging in the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, dealing with the lethal anthrax spores found in the mail, and trying to stabilize the declining economy. A greater sense of patriotism had arisen but the public seemed to be gripped in fear and was supportive of whatever the government was planning.

As a closure to that unsettling semester, I invited my students to each write a reflection on how their lives had been impacted by September 11. The following is a summary and some quotes of what they wrote.

Students' Reflections:
Fear and Confusion

The immediate responses to the attacks of September 11 were feelings of shock, fear, and confusion. A student who was asleep when the attacks occurred wrote:

I very distinctly recall waking up in a startled manner as my phone was ringing. My mother-in-law said, 'we're being attacked!' When I turned on my TV, I was in shock. I stayed home from work and kept my son from school. I remembered being scared and confused.

Another student remembered:

I began to feel unsettled, fearful, and vulnerable. It was as if we didn't quite know what to expect. I realized just how much we lacked control. At times I still feel somewhat helpless.

Empathy

Students felt very sad for those who had lost their lives. Some reflected on the final moments of the victims:

Those cell phone calls that all of the passengers made to say their last 'goodbyes'. I pondered for many weeks about whom I would have called to say my 'goodbyes' to. It made me very sad to have heard those conversations repeated over and over on the news.

I remember seeing a couple join hands and leap off the building together and they looked somewhat peaceful going down. What desperation one must have had to leap off a building of great heights? It made me question the fight/flight mode that we all have within us. I might have jumped off the building too, to save myself from being burned to death. Chaos, desperation, and helplessness, those were the thoughts that went through my mind for weeks after the attack. I kept thinking about all of the victims.

Students also expressed concern about the survivors of victims and especially for their children. They wondered if these children could ever understand why their parent had died. Some were concerned for those who were made scapegoats because of their ethnicity:

I was also fearful of what would happen to individuals of Arabic Middle Eastern descent and of retaliation against innocent people. I was saddened to see that some people did die or got hurt but I realized that more people could have been targeted. I just hope no one else is injured by ignorant people.

Some students thought that there was a need for forgiveness and were against the

United States using military force. These students envisioned a world where religious and ethnic tolerance existed:

In my view, violence is not the solution because it only teaches children violence and this will create violence. I am upset with the United States, because they have the power to create change in the world, but instead they only added more fuel to a fire.

Myths

Perhaps what I sensed that was most painful to students was that they were forced to change the myths that had been built around them; the illusion that the United States was immune to attacks. Many students were forced to acknowledge that their world, like the rest of humanity's, was not as predictable as they believed it to be. A student reflected:

Growing up and living in the U.S. has given me a false sense of security and about safety. My family lives in Mexico and I could hear about corruption and lack of security in certain parts of that country. It's true that corruption exists in the U.S., but I would always feel safe. The events on 9/11 have made me realize that no matter where you are you are never 100 percent safe.

Students were also forced to see that freedom and civil liberties could be limited even in the United States.

If one is a bit critical about the U.S. going into one of the world's third or fourth poorest country, then you're considered un-American or unpatriotic. That's freedom of speech!...The hours that we have to wait at the airports, the racial profiling that has been going on, this over abundant message to prove to foreigners that we are all united now.

Existentialism

Most expressed a yearning to be in touch with their inner selves and their spirituality. Perceiving life to be fragile, students looked at what was most important to them:

I am more aware of my day-to-day activities and relationships. I treasure moments shared with my loved ones more dearly because I want to make sure they know I love them.

There was also a greater sense of urgency to fulfill life's purpose:

I have steered my course to become a humane, compassionate, and just individual. To live my life by example and to work toward ending hate, bigotry, selfishness, and cruelty.I believe I have a more political activist angle and a need to act on behalf of issues that are salient to me.

Conclusion

As I mentioned, the attacks of September 11 did not shock me drastically. Having lived in different parts of the world and belonging to them, I would say that September 11 strengthened my belief, as a human being and as an educator, that the world is indeed small and that people everywhere are more alike than we are different. We have been socialized to be patriotic; to identify with an ethnic, racial, religious, and political group. The stories we are told and teach of humanity's search for truth, meaning, and significance have taken forms via cultural, religions, national, and religious symbols. Whether we like it or not these myths still support our society, its moral order, and cohesion. However, these myths also make us regard ourselves as favored over others and feel that we have the right to dominate others. In a world of change and with distances shortening, we need to be humble and be willing to understand, teach, and appreciate others' stories as much as our

own. In so doing we need not be intimidated and suspicious of one another, and at the very least, need to safeguard the existence of our planet! Perhaps there will come a time when we can all teach and learn the same universal myths. After all, all of us are seeking the meaning, the experience, and the feeling of being alive!

How Social Work Students Felt on 9/11: Reflections from Student Logs

By Paul Abels, Ph.D.

Instructor's Note

I require each of my classes to keep a log. In that assignment the students are generally asked to note and reflect on items related to the specific course, connections with field practice, and general social work-related material in their current experiences. Relevant items from the media are often mentioned. The items below are a few of their entries on and shortly after 9/11. They were not asked to direct their comments to 9/11, which occurred after their second session. These are all first-semester graduate students.

The content has not been edited except to make sure names, ages, and any other content that might identify them or an agency were removed. Students gave permission for extended quotations to be published. Most also said their names could be used, but all names noted in the excerpts are fictitious. Five students' contributions are presented below. The choices were made to illustrate the variety of reactions. The dates preceeding the entry are the dates they were written into the logs. The comments of the other students could have just as easily been included. Some of the students wrote two and three pages on 9/11 in their logs. While they make cogent reading, they are not included in their entirety due to the nature of this presentation. This is a small sample of their reflections.

September 11, 2001

Oh my God.

What can I say. I'm scared. I hurt. I'm stunned. I'm bewildered and confused. All I want to do is cry. And I can't, for I work in a place where I have to be there for others. In between supporting families in their crisis, I tried to fill my own need for information by staying glued to the radio. I am so overrun with feelings and emotions I can't concentrate on anything. The horrid events I saw on TV this morning haunted my day and creep in at a moment of mind's rest. There is no place to quiet the mind. This is terrible and I can't do anything to fix it. I fear what is to come next. (Alice)

September 11, 2001

Very frightening stuff on the news. 400 phone calls back East, so far so good thank God. Work was calm. Almost quiet. Staff looking shell shocked; patients no showing; kids in our adolescent program who are usually very "cool" visibly upset....I just keep breathing and praying for peace and that George W. does not so anything too rash and am glad his father and Mr. Cheney tend to be knowledgeable folks that might guide him along, (Jean)

September 11-20, 2001
(Various students)

This was a tragic day for America with the destruction in New York and Washington D.C. Just within my own family I witnessed the affects of violence on children and adults.

A day of amazing destruction and terror! Thousands needing to be calmed and cared for - Social Workers to the rescue! I am certain that New Yorkers will not be

alone in their dispair...

I am hearing people talk about being suspect of people with Mid-Eastern accents and I worry that we will repeat the mistakes of World War II.

Does my country understand that this is World War III?

Driving around with flags on their cars. Do they truly understand why they are waving the flag or are they caught up in the hype and propaganda?

September 13, 2001

I have had a few ideas in the past weeks and I've said, "Aha, I'll put those in the log," and I meant to, and should have and could have, but I didn't. Meanwhile 9/11/01 has passed and the world is a different place. I am preoccupied with what has happened to us and I would like to share some thoughts.

I am wary, though, that I might run on and my thoughts might be too emotional in tenor or the intent can be a personal catharsis rather than a discussion of ideas but nevertheless I can not focus on other issues now.

I picked up the New York Times yesterday but I didn't read it during the day, and in the evening, I found myself watching TV non-stop while simultaneously being on call for (name of agency). I thought how interesting to juxtapose my time between calls concerning...with the vivid and repetitive images/commentary.....

At work, we talk we talk in groups about our distaste for war rhetoric and retribution. The answers are not an "easy fix", solace can not be found in more pain. Don't we know better? Aren't we all brothers and sisters? It is a time of sadness and grieving, not anger. Yet...if I had a loved one needlessly die, after the shock there would be less objectivity and more anger. I am not completely devoid of anger or potential anger, yet where are we going? (Sandra)

September 13, 2001

More of the same; some friends being deployed by the Red Cross to do crisis work with some victims families. Other friends being deployed with the military to parts unknown, class should be interesting. (Jean)

September 15, 2001

Got a few minutes to write before class begins. The axis has shifted - been hard to focus knowing that the grand old flag is about to kill again. 40 billion dollars out of whose budget? Somehow I don't think that it's going into social programs. If social welfare programs weren't in trouble before, they certainly are now. America's just thrown away all kinds of civil rights, rights to privacy & given this.....even more power. Unbelievable. I'm horrified and the more I write the crazier I feel. (Carol)

September 24, 2001

I finally had to stop listening to the radio and watching TV because it was making me very depressed due to the September 11th disaster.

Patriotism is interesting to me. It seems that people pull together to say "we are loyal to our group that is distinct and separate from your group, or anyone else's group." So in a sense, patriotism promotes separation of different groups. It promotes the "us and them" syndrome. (Doris)

September 27, 2001

Been a while since I've written. Felt paralyzed - mostly by my own negativism. Hard to write when my words are so all of

despondent spew—still have to write. So social policy in the 21st century appears to be a non-issue if one were to pay attention to the news media. (Carol)

September 21, 2001

I guess I'm ready to discuss the disaster some now. ..I didn't expect that I would be as upset about the whole thing as I turned out to be. I didn't know any of those people who died, and New York is quite a distance from where I live, it hit me very hard. I cried before I went to work, and when I got to work, I was surprised to see that it was mostly business as usual. No one seemed very upset and they were going about their day as if nothing had happened. I was still quite upset so I went in and spoke with a counselor co-worker, who I work closely with, for a while. It helped to have someone to share the experience with and to provide mutual support. I was surprised that...agency...did not offer their employees a debriefing. (Doris)

September 30-October 2, 2001

On 9/13 the phone rang and it was my friend B from New York and we talked for awhile. She said that upping her dose of Prozac has helped. I also didn't continue writing because I wasn't quite ready to discuss "the event" in terms of intellectual or future considerations. I also did not continue writing because I felt somewhat guilty or felt that it was askew to write about projected concerns, when there was/is immediate enormity of suffering to be acknowledged. The news of September 11 hit me hard and fast. (Sandra)

An association from 9/11; we received no acknowledgement from administration about the events. Not even a minimum, "thanks for coming in and working while all this was going on." I heard that "X" went to a meeting that day and didn't mention anything about the events at the meeting and just said, "Let's get down to business." I found that very sad from an agency that is supposed to be a little savvy on human relationships. On the other hand we have autonomy. We have created a Friday morning group after 9/11 and we discuss thoughts/feelings concerning 9/11 and sometimes we also discuss stressful components to being a social worker. (Sandra)

Instructor's Note

I did not discuss these specific entries with the students, as the logs were handed in a few months after the events of 9/11. We did discuss 9/11 in the class following the attack. I see now that the discussion did not have the power of the log entrees. It is interesting how much comes out when persons start to write about the experience and their feelings. The class discussion did, however, add some dimensions that the logs didn't offer the students. It was the ability of the students to make connections with each other and, in some cases, with the instructor. It was the ability to share their feelings with other students but also a sense of being able to count on each other. Unlike other classroom discussions, no one interrupted others comments. Nor did I. I was no more an expert on feelings and solutions than they were. And if there was ever a time when persons could say they were in the same boat, this was surely such an occasion.

As the physical landscape changed on September 11th, the landscape of our own lives has changed as well. I know I had many of the same feelings as the students on and after September 11th. I wish I had kept a log.

I wish to thank all the students for their openness and willingness to share and risk by writing their reactions.

SUBSCRIBE TO REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

Read articles by leaders in the social work field as well as other helping professions. Published quarterly.

$40 per year*

Name _____

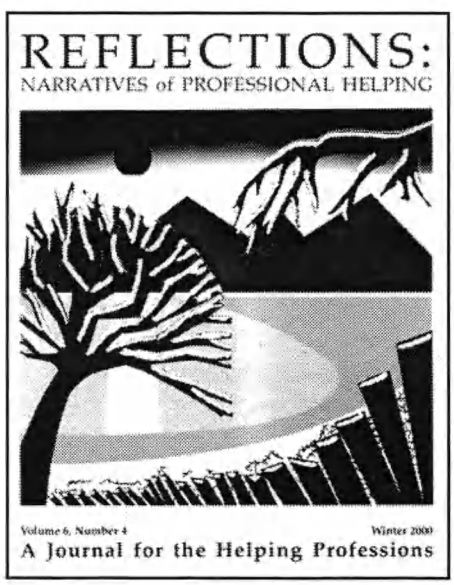
Address _____

_____

Phone Number _____

Check or Money Order enclosed

Credit Card Number & Expiration date _____



Make checks payable to REFLECTIONS

Mail to:

REFLECTIONS
CSULB Dept. of Social Work
1250 Bellflower Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90840

*Individual subscriptions within the U.S.: $40 per year. Libraries and institutions: $65 per year. Outside the U.S.: Add $15.

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping (ISSN 1080-0220) is published quarterly by the University Press at California State iversity, Long Beach under the auspices of the Department of Social Work. Annual Subscription Rate: individuals, $40.00; libraries and itutions, $65.00; outside USA, add $15.00. Single copies: $10.00. Payment: check, money order, or credit card (Visa or MasterCard, ase include number and expiration date). Please send to **REFLECTIONS: CSULB; Long Beach, CA 90840-0902**. We remind subscrib- to please immediately notify Reflections of address changes, providing both new and old addresses. Please allow six weeks for dress changes to take effect.

The purpose of ***Reflections*** is to publish narratives, personal accounts that describe and explain the process of helping others and ping social change over time. The journal seeks to build a literary tradition for critical study. It encourages stories that convey a sense mmediacy, portray practice across diverse populations and capture the range and variety of strategies and systems within the helping fessions. The journal publishes stories of professional helpers such as ethicists, psychotherapists, community organizers, case and up workers, policy makers, family and child practitioners, health and mental healthcare providers; educators, researchers, and admin- ators in the helping professions. Historical and contemporary narratives are encouraged.

Narratives should give readers a fresh perspective about the practice of change. Narratives explain and describe events, results, flicts, complicating actions, and how, why, and what was done. In narratives, the writer evaluates the experience, whether or not there resolution, and explores the meaning of the experience. Some narratives end with a coda; a perspective on what occurred.

Writing Instructions and Submission: Manuscripts are peer reviewed. Articles appropriate to the journal's purpose are reviewed nymously by members of the Executive and Editorial Boards. Publication decisions require about two to four months. All articles are yedited before publication.

1. Authors are expected to use APA format.
2. The manuscript length depends upon the temporal sequence of the event.
3. Include, on a separate page, a brief abstract (no more than five lines) written in the same style as the narrative.
4. Place identifying information such as name, affiliation(s), title(s), address, and phone/fax numbers **only on cover page.**
5. Send three (3) printed, double spaced hard copies of the manuscript, **set in 12 point Times New Roman** to the editor.

Upon Acceptance of the article for publication, please supply your manuscript in rich text format (RTF) on a 3.5" Windows or MS- S floppy disk along with one additional hard copy.

mes of persons and organizations mentioned in the articles published in Reflections have been changed to protect their privacy. *lections* disclaims responsibility for statements, either fact or opinion, made by contributors.

REFLECTIONS: Narratives of Professional Helping
California State University Long Beach
Department of Social Work
1250 Bellflower Boulevard
Long Beach, CA 90840-0902
(562) 985-4626
http://www.csulb.edu/depts/socialwk/reflections

PRINTED QUARTERLY BY **THE CSULB UNIVERSITY PRESS**

Periodicals postage paid at Long Beach, CA

Reflections: NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
Department of Social Work - 111194
1250 Bellflower Boulevard
Long Beach, California 90840-0902

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED