

***CREATING  
PROTECTED  
SPACES***



***FOR CHILDREN AND  
FAMILIES IN  
TRANSITION***

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR:**

- Victim Advocacy Programs
- Child Based Non-Profit Agencies
- Educators
- Law Enforcement Agencies
- Agencies Supporting Families of Veterans

*The healing process requires that all entities have a sense of a multi-disciplinary/multi- agency approach to helping families in transition towards recovery. If you don't think this applies to you, **THINK AGAIN**. It takes a village.  
**Just Ask Yourself To Care***

# INTRODUCTION

Protected spaces are places where victims and families can feel safe to heal post trauma....safe emotionally, safe physically, and safe from intrusive entities that can cause further harm. These spaces may or may not be actual physical locations, but MUST include the positive collaboration of a variety of agencies, entities, media outlets, and individuals dedicated to the healing process. A sense of security as perceived by the family is of the utmost importance. There is a need for the comprehensive education of families, mental health providers, law enforcement agencies, non-profit agencies, and educators in order for this to occur. It does indeed take a village...the village must first be created...*Just Ask Yourself to Care.*

The JAYC Foundation, Inc., with a grant supplied by the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc., has consulted with the National Organization for Victim Assistance in creating this booklet. It is a beginning of an educational and training process for families that have been harmed in high profile incidents. The process alerts essential entities and agencies to the need for guidelines in the response to these families. It also provides a variety of resources available to these families. These guidelines were initially framed around the special needs of abducted children and their families, but are also for the following: children and families healing from events of major crime; those suffering from major disaster; families seeking to reconnect after returning from military deployment; and children who have experienced a prolonged separation from one or both parents. In this booklet we sometimes use the words “victims” or “survivors” interchangeably. Many have a preference one way or the other, but we use them as one and the same.



# STRATEGY

The most important aspect of creating protected spaces is the collaboration and cooperation between multiple entities and agencies. Each has an agenda specific to its own mission, expertise, and purview. The task is to create a reunification team approach amongst these entities so that the victims and families can receive the support and resources they need; so that law enforcement can get the evidence and information it needs to follow the justice process; and the public gets the information it is entitled to without exploiting the family's private story or threatening the family's fragile recovery process. The focus should be in helping families come to their own conclusions regarding available options.

The core of the team is a clinical group comprised of a Psychologist or Psychiatrist, a Clinical Social Worker, and another mental health professional/psychiatric RN. This core group then identifies a team leader who will serve as a contact with all relevant agencies. This team leader is responsible for developing a collaborative relationship with the primary victim/family as well as the broader reunification team. The most important qualification for the clinical reunification team leader is someone with the requisite expertise regarding the dynamics of abduction as well as crisis management/disaster response. These skills are distinct from trauma therapy per se, and clinicians without this experience are advised to consult with qualified mental health professionals as needed. These professionals are identifiable through the JAYC Foundation, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the National Organization for Victim Assistance.

The first phase of the reunification process is evaluating how to manage the immediate crisis. Case management regarding specific immediate needs of each case can include short term solution focused individual and family therapy when appropriate. Possible interventions are identified, considered, and described with known risks and benefits for each, as well as the risks and benefits of no intervention. The family members are made aware of the recommendations.

Once the crisis is stabilized the reunification team moves on to a phase that includes life skills and socialization training. Depending on circumstances, a wide variation in developmental ages exist. In some instances the interruption of the family process has been so extreme that the family members have been deprived of the normal developmental experiences.

After the reunification phase the team moves on to the transition phase which includes assembling and accessing the clinical treatment team and other resources that will be needed by the family for an unspecified period. Resources are identified for each family with the assistance of the reunification team. They include but are not limited to medical, mental health, educational and legal.

Crisis creates vulnerability. Every effort is made to empower the family to make their own decisions and to create options for them to select. These choices are a crucial part of the treatment regardless of the stage of the reunification process. The interventions and activities chosen for each family allow for options in the depth of interpretations made by the families. For some families, cooking, horseback riding, and hiking are merely activities to connect, while others see them as vehicles for developmental growth and self- awareness. Each family sets the tone for the reunification or transitional work. In the case of multiple perspectives in the family, the focus becomes finding the common theme for all of the family members. It is possible that the work can reveal hidden issues that are distressing to one or more of the family participants. In some cases the issues can be addressed in the context of the reunification work which may include various forms of individual and family therapy. In other cases adjunct work with existing therapists or referrals to new therapists or agencies can be an important component for ongoing work.

**The goals and objectives for the reunification team:**

- **Inclusive solution focused treatment**
- **Encourage and foster a working relationship for the entire family by promoting a balanced perspective and an inclusive solution focused perspective**
- **Help families untangle difficulties caused by whatever crisis, conflict, or challenge that was experienced by this particular family. Model problem solving.**
- **Strengthen existing familial relationships and promote and support the development of compassion and communication skills**
- **Strengthen empowerment of the family in the face of outside interference from extraneous well-meaning agencies such as courts, media, and community organizations.**

# STRATEGIC VALUES FOR AUTHORITIES

**Compassion:** Recognize the plight that victims are experiencing and seek to communicate in authentic, supportive and appropriate ways. Empathy is good, but the most important is the recognition of the impact of the trauma.

**Cooperation:** Cooperate with those harmed to the best of their ability with the view that cooperation serves victims and the investigation. While there are recognized legal and emotional boundaries, authorities should relinquish control to victims to the extent possible.

**Competence:** Fulfill professional roles to the best of their abilities. Acknowledge when more specialized services or experience is needed.

**Collaboration:** Avoid territorial boundaries. Operate as a team. When in doubt, consult, consult, consult...

**Courage:** Have the courage to be real. Victims have a hard time responding to formal demeanors.

**Creativity:** Think outside the box. Traditional approaches are not necessarily appropriate for trauma services. Don't be afraid to step outside the lines or the office and join the family in experiencing their strengths and weaknesses. Always be mindful, authentic, and purposeful.

**Connection:** The relationships are central to this process. Develop an authentic human connection.

# STRATEGIC NEEDS OF CHILD AND FAMILY VICTIMS

**Information:** Victim families seek accurate facts about their present reality and future needs. They want information to make decisions and to be realistic in their expectations. This information should not be released to the public without family readiness and involvement.

**Insulation:** Victims need trusted protection/boundaries from unnecessary exposure to systems and people. The team can help families decide what kind of exposure they want, and when.

**Initiative:** Survivors need insight and input from informed, expert, and trustworthy sources that isn't biased but rather balanced. The team can assist in initiating connection with those whose perspective is victim centered. Directive opinions of professionals should be greatly tempered if not completely withheld.

**Industry:** Victims need access to meaningful and useful resources for coping and recovery, including skills. Often the caring but uninformed public will deluge the family/families with well-meaning unneeded items. Financial donations need to be managed for immediate and long-term needs of the families.

**Integrity:** Often families are offered money or items that come with expectations. Some agencies/entities want publicity or endorsements for their donations. Integrity is doing the right thing when no one is looking. Donations should be ethical and given without expectation.

**Investment:** Families need professionals who are willing to invest their time and effort in them as people...both in the short and long-term.

**Integration:** The family may need services and support for years to come. The team will assist in locating resources that are available for long-term support.

# DISCUSSION

An extremely important issue to be recognized is that the family system is forever altered and a new reality, or a "new normal" as we call it, is forced upon the family. Our experience shows that families can grow and even thrive in crisis when offered a multifaceted, strength-based, family systems approach to the crisis, conflict or challenge. It is extremely important to include siblings. If gifts are sent make sure siblings are included. The new reality of each family member will be different and each will have different needs.

Another important issue is the inclusion of a media consultant in the reunification team. This person can protect the family from unwanted publicity, undue speculation, and possible exploitation by helping the family tell their story. This must be in their own words, in a manner of their own choosing, and only when they are ready. This protection is extremely important in any high-profile case.

The community itself must rise to the occasion and respect the *protected space* of the child and family. There can be stigma attached to many types of trauma which can cause us to deny or minimize both its occurrence and its effects. There is clear evidence that children and their families who have experienced traumatic events can heal and reclaim their lives in communities that have the knowledge, commitment, skills, and resources to support them.

There exists a phenomenon that the trauma "belongs" to the community, as we are all affected when bad things happen amongst us. The community will probably need to grieve and cope with the fact that it is not immune from trauma. While rallying support, it is of the utmost importance to remember that the grief process of the community will not be the same as that of the family. Timetables are different for each individual, each family, and each community.



This is where the reunification team can be helpful to the community as a whole. It is the responsibility of the team leader to maintain contact with the community entities and to give the family choices about supporting and/or participating in community events surrounding the trauma. This holds true even years after the event, as anniversaries will be significant.

Contact your District Attorney's office that will likely have a victim advocate who is connected to the team, or contact the National Organization for Victim Assistance. Find out what resources would be helpful. Be respectful. Not all families want a public display of support, but need to know that the community is there for them.

In conclusion, there are several entities that have gathered to develop a set of practice guidelines for the convergence of agencies responding to these traumatic events with children and families. It is our hope that communities will take these and create teams to be ready for such events. Share this with colleagues, friends, local agencies, and law enforcement.



Please visit the website of the Foundation at *[thejaycfoundation.org](http://thejaycfoundation.org)*.

By the end of 2015 there will be free online videos for professionals, families, educators, and the community. These will be demonstrations of our educational programs as follows:

**Creating Protected Spaces.** There will be further discussion for professionals, families, and the community about creating teams to work with children and families recovering post trauma.

**LEO (Law Enforcement Officers).** This program was developed with Jaycee Dugard's case in mind. It aims to increase awareness skills and provide new perspectives to incorporate into this awareness. The program offers an interactive alternative approach through a day long workshop, utilizing equine assisted exercises and drawing upon the experience of the Dugard family.

**JAYC School Groups.** A major concern of the Foundation is the level of empathy, compassion, and awareness amongst school children in our communities. These school based workshops are based on what we call "Cow Culture" ( from the time of the Wild West when one's word was a promise kept and the villages protected their own) and help to empower school children to work in teams to develop integrity, awareness, mindfulness, connection and creativity. The curriculum is provided by mental health workers and educators through a combination of didactic in-class presentations and off-site experiential activities.

# TIPS

- Offer authentic validation
- Remember that every case is unique
- Be sure to include the entire family-the trauma has affected everyone
- Active listening is a must. Let the parties who are harmed ventilate without trying to solve anything for them.
- Recognize that the key to healing will come from within the family
- Point out small achievements
- Identify strengths
- Develop an authentic human connection
- Be mindful and purposeful in your actions
- Avoid re-injury through questions that imply blame
- Have the courage to listen
- Always encourage writing and read it when it is produced
- Remember to offer services to the community at large. This community will need help in moving on
- The use of language is very important. DO NOT use the word "closure" as there is no such thing in these types of trauma or loss. There is adaptation, growth, healing, coping, and recovery, but the reality of loss, though changing over time, is never gone from one's experience.
- Team members must be able to listen actively; share information openly and willingly; cooperate and pitch in when and where needed; be flexible, roll with the punches, and be ready to adapt to ever-changing situations; balance all perspectives; show commitment and be worthy of trust; be solution oriented; trust fellow team members and treat them with courtesy and consideration; and be able to have fun and use sense of humor when warranted.

# TIPS FOR FAMILIES

- Focus on open, honest communication.
- Don't be afraid of conflict or strong feelings
- Be ready for a wide range of emotions.
- Be aware that all activities done together are important to reconnect and heal, even things as seemingly mundane as cooking, taking walks, and having meals together.
- Be able to call 'time out' and walk away for a break when things become intense.
- Always return to the discussion.
- Be involved in defining the goals - this is your recovery process.
- Be an active participant.
- Learn healthy and effective coping skills.
- Don't give up hope that you can move through this.



# IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF RECOVERY

- **Self-direction:** maximum autonomy, independence, and control of resources.
- **Individualized and person-oriented:** each person has unique strengths and resiliencies. Each has their own needs, preferences, experiences, and cultural background.
- **Empowerment:** remember that victims have been stripped of power and allow participation in all decisions that will affect their lives. Give information, education and support for this process.
- **Holistic:** remember all aspects of a person's recovery - mind, body, spirit, housing, employment, education, and peer/community support.
- **Non-linear:** recovery after a trauma is a gradual process. There will be continued growth, occasional setbacks and learning from experience.
- **Strength-based:** focus on building and supporting multiple capacities, resiliencies, talents, coping abilities, and inherent worth of individuals. Provide trust-based relationships.
- **Peer support:** utilize resources in schools, mental health agencies and the community as a whole.
- **Respect:** eliminate discrimination and stigma by educating the community about the recovery process.
- **Responsibility:** the recovery process requires courage and responsibility from each member of the family and the team.
- **Hope:** people can and do overcome negative experiences and move to a more positive and balanced way of life. Hope is the catalyst of the recovery process.

# COMPASSION FATIGUE

Those of you who help children/family victims in the aftermath of their trauma and through their recovery process are high risk for compassion fatigue. You may become physically and emotionally drained. You can become apathetic, irritable, and take on a numb or negative attitude. You can even experience a loss of interest in your work. Previously you were able to take a break and recharge your batteries, but this time you are struggling more than usual. This is a result of gradual loss of empathy for others which can occur after a long period of emotional and physical overload.

Those in the health care and mental health professions are the most susceptible, but this is not exclusive. Fire fighters, law enforcement personnel, first responders, clergy, social service workers, educators, and personal caregivers are also at risk. All of you work in or near environments that are constantly presenting heart wrenching emotional challenges. Many of you attracted to the field are already familiar with your own tragedies or trauma. You tend to have a strong identification with helpless, suffering, or traumatized people.



*The first step in helping yourself is to recognize the symptoms of compassion fatigue. These include, but are not limited to:*

- Isolation from others
- Emotional numbness
- Apathy, low motivation, unusual sadness -
- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Self-doubt, feelings of incompetence and hopelessness
- Reduced productivity
- Diminished ability to feel empathy - Irritability and negative attitude
- Poor self-care
- Recurring nightmares or flashbacks
- Substance abuse to mask feelings - Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Sense of disillusionment
- Chronic physical ailments such as frequent colds or gastrointestinal distress

*Early recognition and awareness are crucial steps in becoming resilient to compassion fatigue. It is a treatable condition. Most importantly, keep a proactive and healthy balance in your life. Keeping your body and your mind in good health is key to being strong through distress. Remember the flight attendant who always says to put on your own oxygen mask first!*

## Ways of maintaining balance include, but are not limited to:

- Get enough sleep
- Maintain a regular exercise routine
- Eat a balanced, nutritious diet
- Exchange information and feelings with people who can validate you
- Learn to set limits with others and yourself.
- Don't take on more than you can handle
- Be kind to yourself, have some fun, laugh!
- Develop a healthy support system
- Get medical attention for those symptoms that are interfering with your daily functioning
- See a counselor to assist you in dealing with the stress of your work and experiences
- Get professional help for yourself to get back on track

*With support, insightful information, and authentic self-care you can begin to understand and manage the complexity of emotions you are experiencing. Give yourself credit for your dedication, for moving forward, and for affecting change. Your hard work will pay off.*



# RESOURCES

**Organization for Survivors of Trauma and Victimization:**

[www.giftfromwithin.org](http://www.giftfromwithin.org)

**Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project:** [www.compassionfatigue.org](http://www.compassionfatigue.org)

**National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:**

[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

**National Organization for Victim Assistance:** [www.trynova.org](http://www.trynova.org)

**National Center for Victims of Crime:** [www.victimsofcrime.org](http://www.victimsofcrime.org)

**The National Child Traumatic Stress Network:** [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)

**National Association of Elementary School Principals:** [www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org)

**National Association of School Psychologists:** [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org)

**Law Enforcement Family Support Network:**

[www.lawenforcementfamilysupport.org](http://www.lawenforcementfamilysupport.org)

**C.O.P.S - Concerns of Police Survivors:** [www.nationalcops.org](http://www.nationalcops.org)

**Blue Star Families:** [www.bluestarfamilies.org](http://www.bluestarfamilies.org)

**Child Welfare League of America:** [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)

**American Legion:** [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

**Got Your 6:** [www.gotyour6.org](http://www.gotyour6.org)

**National Military Family Organization: Operation Purple Program**

[www.militaryfamily.org/our-programs/operation-purple](http://www.militaryfamily.org/our-programs/operation-purple)

**Virginia Tech Victims Family Outreach Foundation**

[www.vtvfamilyfoundation.org](http://www.vtvfamilyfoundation.org)

**The JAYC Foundation:** [www.thejaycfoundation.org](http://www.thejaycfoundation.org)

**Transitioning Families:** [www.transitioningfamilies.com](http://www.transitioningfamilies.com)

## BOOKS

**A Stolen Life: A Memoir** by Jaycee Dugard

**Safe Kids, Smart Parents: What Parents Need to Know to Keep Their**

**Children Safe** by Rebecca Bailey, Ph.D. with Elizabeth Bailey, RN, BC

**Beyond Healing: The Path to Personal Contentment After Trauma**

by Dave Ziegler, Ph. D.

**Traumatic Experience and the Brain, A Handbook for Understanding and Treating Those Traumatized as Children**

Dave Ziegler, Ph.D.

**Bringing Adam Home: The Abduction That Changed America**

By Les Standiford.

**The Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems**

by Ronald D. Siegel, Ph.D.

**Child Abuse Trauma** by John N. Briere

**Trauma and Recovery** by Judith Herman, M.D.

**Healing Trauma** Peter A. Levine, Ph.D.

**The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the**

**Healing of Trauma** Bessel von der Kolk, M.D.

**The Transitioning Families Reunification Model in Non- Familial**

**Abductions** Lippert, Bailey, Judge, et al. Family Court Review (in press)

**The Other Side of Sadness** by George A. Bonanno

*I promise to live with  
Integrity,  
To have compassion for all  
living things,  
To be aware of my  
Surroundings,  
And Just Ask Myself To Care.*



*THE ROAD HOME  
CAN BE LONELY*



[WWW.THEJAYCFUNDATION.ORG](http://WWW.THEJAYCFUNDATION.ORG)