

# *The Meaning of Assistance*

By

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In these terrible times everyone wants to know what to do to help. They want to assist the victims of our national tragedies. They want to assist fire, rescue and law enforcement personnel. They want to assist their neighbors, their friends and their families. And, in reality, they also want to help themselves. Here is one way to look at *assistance*.

**A** Assurance. People need lots of assurance now. They need to be assured that government agencies are doing everything humanly possible to prevent further terrorist events. And they need to know that every effort is being made to find and bring to justice the murderers of thousands of innocent people. People need to know that they are loved and cared for and that they mean something to somebody else. Do not be afraid to assure the people in your lives that they are cherished.

**S** Security. Children need to know that they are secure within their families. Individuals and families must adjust to the threats that exist during this time of war. They should know that following some common sense rules and the guidelines offered by security experts in the law enforcement agencies could enhance every person's safety.

**S** Structure. An antidote to chaos and confusion is structure. Families, individuals and even business and organizations should be encouraged to maintain routines and structures. Work times, eating times, sleeping times and family times should be encouraged. Now is a time to pull together for the common good. Structure enhances strength and stamina in the face of danger.

**I** Information. People need current, accurate and practical information. Information is a great anxiety reducer. It reassures, it guides, it strengthens, it assists, it supports and it encourages people in all walks of life.

**S** Support. Most people in a catastrophe need support and guidance, not psychotherapy. Crisis intervention is a non-intrusive, comprehensive, systematic and multi-part package of interventions that renders support to people struggling through a crisis. Let us use our crisis intervention skills well. We can make a difference.

**T** Truth. The terrorists are expert at lying. Telling the truth is essential if we want to win the war on terrorism. The government needs to tell the citizens the truth even when it is not good news. Businesses need to tell the truth. So do churches, organizations and families. It is understandable that some secrets have to be kept, but when something is told it must be the truth. Trust can be maintained only when truth is at the core of communications.

**A** Action. Be part of the effort. Be vigilant. Report criminal or suspicious behavior. Write a check. Help a neighbor. Check on the elderly. Volunteer for service. Read a book to a frightened child. Write a letter to a rescuer or to a soldier. As Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, “Try something”.

**N** Neutralize. Counter rumors with facts. It is normal to have negative feelings in these tough times. But, let's not get stuck in those feelings. Put up opposition to the “nay-sayers” and pessimists. We have been wounded, not killed. We are a strong nation. Our core principles are good. We are a nation that has been born in adversity; has grown through periods of national pain and has been tested in the fires of previous wars. We put our trust in God. Instead of saying “It will never work” we need to be saying “What do we need to do to make this effort successful?”

**C** Courage. All of us must have some courage. Wars are not usually won by single extraordinary events. They are won by a vast collection of small individual acts of courage. In our current circumstances we need plenty of tiny bits of courage. It takes courage to turn in a person who generates a hoax that frightens people and ties up law enforcement personnel with unnecessary work. It takes courage to stop using drugs when it is known that the illegal drug profits support terrorist groups around the world. It takes courage to be supportive of our emergency services and military personnel. It takes courage to stand up and do the right thing. Let us have courage as we face the turmoil and dangers ahead.

***E*** Encourage. To win the war we must encourage each other. Be a listening ear. Offer guidance and support. Spend time with people you like. Spend less time watching the horrible events on the news. Maintain the rhythm of your life as normal as possible. Seek help if you need it. Smile and laugh when you can. Be positive and enthusiastic about something. Look out for one another. Refer a person who is having trouble healing from the tragedies to a competent mental health professional. As awful as things are now they can be better again, but only if we are dedicated to recovery and renewal.