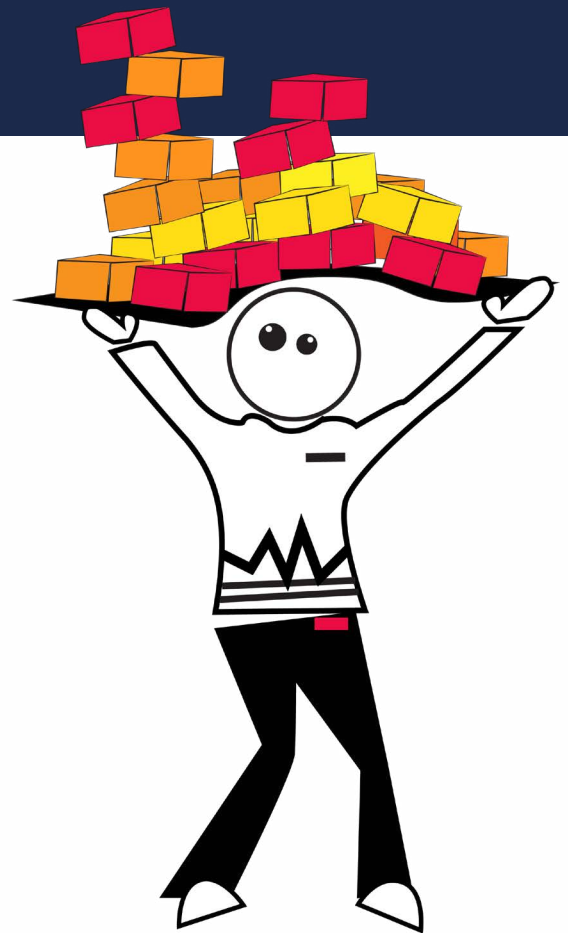


Supporting the supporters in disaster recovery

Winston Churchill Fellowship

Jolie Wills



How do we support those people who are working hard to support long-term recovery often whilst impacted themselves?

Supporting the supporters in disaster recovery

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Jolie Wills

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust who enabled the exploration of how we might support those working in disaster recovery, and believed that supporting those who play a critical role in supporting their communities post-disaster translates to better support for those communities.

Thank you to those who encouraged and supported my application. I am incredibly grateful.

Thank you to New Zealand Red Cross for acknowledging our role in contributing to this learning. Thanks too to my proofing and editing crew.

Thank you to my family and friends who kept the home fires burning, did the kid-schedule dance and kept smiles on my children's faces in my absence.

Thank you to the amazing people in Canterbury working to support recovery in their communities who inspired this work and the many who helped to guide me in its development.

Finally, thank you most of all to the remarkable people who so generously shared their wisdom, insights and ideas on my Fellowship journey. The knowledge contained in this report is yours. Playing the role of jeweler, I hope that I have strung the necklace together in a way which does the hard-won gems, and the inspiring people behind them, justice.

If you'd like support implementing:

Hummingly has created the practical resources and workshops to help make it easy to support the supporters in the wake of disaster.

The learning from this Winston Churchill Fellowship has informed Hummingly's products and approaches – all carefully designed for the recovery context because we know that time, energy and brain space are so limited after disaster.

Whether you're looking for 'plug and play' resources, self-guided workshops or Jolie's expertise for an in-person facilitated masterclasses, Hummingly is here to help make the hard road after disaster just a little easier.

hummingly.co hello@hummingly.co

A report submitted to Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, September 2014.
Available for download at supportingthesupporters.org

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Executive summary

Pavlova¹ without eggs, sushi without rice, apple pie without the apples... post-disaster recovery without people. Staff, volunteers and community members who work to support communities—they are the essential ingredient to a meaningful and sustainable recovery, and they require support.

It is all about the people. They're the ones who get things over the line. If we didn't look after them there would be practical losses. But if you look after them through recovery you create resilience in them. If they can get through these things and come out the other end they will become natural leaders, if they come out of the last episode with fuel in the tank for the next thing. If we lose them we lose them forever.

Fiona Leadbeater – Volunteer, Kinglake Ranges

Over 80 people in six countries offered up reflections relating to their experience in disaster recovery. Their experiences highlight that there is too much at stake if we fail to proactively support the supporters—for the affected communities, for the supporters themselves, and for the organizations they represent.

These key supporters face more than a challenging role in a challenging environment, particularly for those who hail from the disaster affected community, who might simultaneously be managing their own recovery. Every aspect of life is altered and the load carried is tremendous. Ascertaining how to support people working in a complex role, in a complex environment is never going to yield a simple answer.

Supporting the supporters requires a better understanding of the nature of the weight they carry and ensuring that our interactions and efforts actively lighten the load rather than inadvertently contribute to it. Acknowledging and addressing the load is crucial because an individual's strength of character and responsibility for self-care, whilst important, are by themselves insufficient. The infeasibility of carrying too heavy a load over too long a distance and the dual responsibility of organizational support also play a part.

Even people with a high level of confidence and capability cannot continue forever without support.

Machiko Kamiyama – Yamagata University/Care Miyagi

Along with implementation tips and messages for the various roles from funders and recovery authorities to the supporters themselves, 12 principles emerged to shape effective support.

Genuine: Support is genuinely motivated.

Tailored: Support is responsive to the varied needs.

Build understanding: Connections and efforts to understand the realities faced by supporters on the ground are consciously created and retained.

¹Pavlova is an iconic dessert made from egg whites contentiously claimed as a national food by both New Zealand and Australia. In the spirit of neutrality, and being half Australian I will comment no further...

Learn: Developing understanding of disaster recovery processes and realities is essential at all levels, not just at the ground. Simultaneously, role preparation and on-going education of the supporters themselves is vital.

Address the load: Be aware of 'the load' people carry, be wary of inadvertently adding extra burden, and work to address organizational stressors and lighten and share the load where possible.

Prevention: Support is needed to maintain well-being and functioning, and is not simply a curative measure once concerns arise.

Fair: Support is equitably available within teams, across teams, across time, and across types of organizations and supporters.

Flexibility: Ensure sufficient autonomy, flexibility of systems and ways of operating to responsively support communities in the post-disaster environment, within a framework which provides clear direction and guidance.

Engrained: Well-being and support of your people and practice of self-care becomes an essential part of the culture, language and expectations at all levels.

Dedicated Resourcing: Ensure the well-being of your people does not slip off the radar through the formation of frameworks, processes and dedicated resourcing.

Connect: Link with peers facing similar challenges, with 'buddies' within the team, with professional supervision and with others with previous lived recovery experience.

Reflect, celebrate: Build in opportunities for reflection, for acknowledging efforts and to identify and celebrate success.

Recovery is about taking opportunities to grow great communities following hardship. Great communities emerge on the backs of great people. It is improbable that there will never be a better return for your efforts or people more deserving of your support.

Local staff and volunteers might not have the network and resources that delegates or managers have, but you cannot achieve without them. Keep them and keep them well.

Louise Steen Kryger – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies PS Center

If you would like support implementing the recommendations in this report, please reach out to jolie@hummingly.co or visit www.hummingly.co

The impetus

This research was inspired by the dedicated people of Canterbury who are working, in a variety of ways, to support their communities in long-term recovery after the Canterbury earthquakes.

In pitch black at 4.35am, 4 September 2010, a shallow (10 kilometres) 7.1 magnitude earthquake ruptured a previously unidentified fault with an epicenter 40 kilometres from Christchurch city. Significant damage was caused to buildings, home and land, particularly in the Selwyn and Waimakariri districts. Remarkably no lives were lost. In the period since (writing at August 2014) approximately 14,000 aftershocks have rocked the Canterbury district. At lunch time, 12.51pm, 22 February, 2011 a 6.3 magnitude aftershock claimed 185 lives and caused further and more widespread damage to homes, buildings and land. In the months and years since 2010, almost every aspect of life in Canterbury has been disrupted as a result of a non-operational central business district, altered social and community worlds, and upturned basic life assumptions. Particularly challenging have been the impacts of the stress linked to aftershocks, housing shortages, school closures and mergers, land zoning, insurance processes, and the repair or rebuilding of homes, workplaces and infrastructure.

Throughout the period since the ground began rocking, countless people have worked in a multitude of ways to support recovery in Canterbury communities. An incredible outpouring of support, practically, financially and emotionally, was invaluable in the early days and long hours and extraordinary efforts were expended by all involved. Long after the first responders, the bright lights, the media and the initial ground swell of empathy had dispersed, the complex, relentless, all consuming, and for most involved, novel tasks of community recovery remain. Those already depleted from a superhuman effort to respond in the early days, often juggling their own recovery challenges, continue to give of themselves to support others in this daunting environment. The challenges do not let up. Amidst the myriad of players involved in recovery, at all levels and in all types of roles, exhaustion is commonplace.

Two truths confront us. Firstly, for recovery to be meaningful and sustainable, the active role of community is crucial. Secondly, recovery is an endurance feat and in Canterbury we are nowhere near being able to glimpse the finishing tape, (not that any neat completion mark exists in reality). Given that everyone involved, especially those in the community who are essential if the grassroots are to have true and active participation, is bone-weary and we still have some distance to travel, how then do we support people with a role to play in recovery? The welfare, the vibrancy, and the contributions of these people are so incredibly vital to our communities' recovery.

As a practitioner looking for clues to this question, I have found workplace stress theories and resulting suggestions², guidelines for humanitarian workers on deployment³, and work relating to supporting first-responders or focused on the earlier post-disaster phases⁴. All provide guidance which is transferable but none capture the reality of those who are working in the post-disaster environment whilst simultaneously juggling the disruptions that permeate all aspects of life.

To illustrate, consider fictional 'Sasha'. Before the earthquakes Sasha had a busy social service role and successfully balanced the responsibilities of house, immediate and extended family, social and community involvement. However, her 40 hour working role plus external responsibilities has ballooned on every front. Sasha is now simultaneously managing the equivalent roles of:

- A 60-hour week job with added difficulty and complexity
- UN Peacekeeper as exhaustion causes niggles between colleagues at work
- International interpreter responsible for communicating the post-disaster realities and needs to outside personnel or agencies
- Off-road driving specialist – navigating over damaged terrain and ever-changing road closures to manage the school run
- Teaching-assistant to support extra parental, development and learning concerns in relation to her children post disaster
- Site foreman/project manager for home rebuild or repair work
- Insurance specialist fluent in 'legalese'
- Packing and removal contractor – managing multiple house shifts during repair or rebuild processes of her own (or rented) home
- Geologist – able to accurately identify, size, depth and direction of the epicenter of aftershocks as they occur
- Counselor to stressed, distressed and frustrated neighbours and friends
- Parental P.A. – I.T. tasks, process navigation and paperwork to support older parents with their insurance claims, rebuild or repair processes.

With Sasha in mind, I wondered; is the relentless, complex nature of recovery also a challenge to well-being of those working in recovery elsewhere? What is the nature of the load being carried? What do we risk by not looking after the supporters? And most importantly, how do we support those with a role to play in supporting long-term community recovery? These were some of the questions I had as I embarked on a learning journey in the hope that we might become better equipped to support the incredibly dedicated people working in recovery—here in Canterbury, and for current and future disasters around the globe. The simple truth is that without people there is no 'recovery'.

² For example: van Heugten, K. (2011) *Social Work Under Pressure: How to Overcome Stress, Fatigue and Burnout in the Workplace*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

³ Antares Foundation. (2012) *Managing Stress in Humanitarian Workers: Guidelines for Good Practice* (3rd Ed). This can be downloaded from the Antares website: antaresfoundation.org

⁴ US Department of Health and Human Services. (2005) *A guide to managing stress in crisis response professionals*. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Reference Center for Psychosocial Support. (2013). *Caring for volunteers: A psychosocial support toolkit*. Copenhagen. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Yes there would be barriers—all sorts of barriers. There would be HR policy barriers. There would be finance barriers. They'd be blah, blah, blah... It doesn't matter. Everything that I try to implement has barriers. That doesn't matter. I don't know what to implement though. I don't know what to push for. I don't know who I have to sit down, harass enough or write the grant for... I actually just don't know. There's a thousand ways to skin a cat if you know what the cat looks like and you know where the cat lives and you know how to hunt the cat. If I know what it is then I can focus on getting some science behind it, so I can get some evidence for it, so I can get some funding for it, so I can...

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

The how

This research has been made possible thanks to a Winston Churchill Fellowship, support from New Zealand Red Cross and the generous contribution of knowledge and insights of those who participated.

During May and June 2014, seven weeks were spent visiting people and places with the aim of learning from other disasters and from the dedicated people working in those contexts. Locations were chosen due to their relevance in terms of socio-economic similarities to New Zealand or to their concentration of humanitarian support expertise. They included various locations in Australia, Japan, Europe and the United States. See Appendix A for details.

Semi-structured interviews involved a purposefully wide range of people representing those with a (current or previous) role supporting communities in recovery in a myriad of forms, or whose role has involved advising, supporting or relied upon interactions with the supporters. A conscious effort was made to ensure the experiences of those 'working on the ground' in recovery were represented. In acknowledgment that support for communities and challenges of working in a recovery environment comes from and affects people in all sorts of roles; volunteers, community leaders, teachers, business network leaders, local government reception staff, building consent personnel, recovery workers, social service providers, researchers, and psychologists were amongst those interviewed. For some in the disaster-impacted community their role existed before the disaster but has been made more complex and challenging since. For some their role has developed in response to the disaster. For others, a role in disaster recovery practice, research or advising regarding trauma or staff support is their 'bread and butter.' 81 people contributed. See Appendix B for details of those interviewed.

Semi-structured interviews covered the following themes:

- What are the challenges of working in recovery⁵?
- What happens if those with a role to play in recovery are not supported?
- Why should the supporters be supported?
- What support has been or would be helpful?

See Appendix C for examples of the types of questions explored during the semi-structured interviews, and Appendix D for a note on limitations.

Prior to embarking on this fellowship, consultative conversations were held with people playing various recovery roles in Canterbury to shape the themes to be explored, the audiences to consider, and the means of presenting the findings to be useful to those working in recovery. I am grateful to the wide range of people involved, from volunteers, community leaders, service providers and recovery workers to representatives from government departments, who have shaped this work for the better.

⁵ Throughout this report those 'working in recovery' denotes people who have a role to play supporting communities in recovery, incorporating a myriad of people be they community leaders, volunteers, or paid staff who interact with the affected public but who might not be typically classified as holding a recovery role.

Working in recovery – the reality

The first step to addressing any challenge is to understand the nature of the challenge. Little has been chronicled about the realities of working in recovery. Without understanding the challenges involved and the realities faced, it will always be more difficult to provide relevant support. Despite best intentions, we will most likely get it wrong. So what are the realities of a role supporting recovery in a disaster-impacted community?

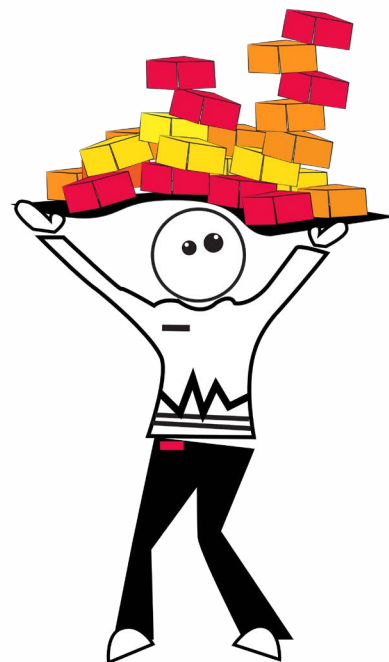
Many described their role in recovery as one of the most meaningful they have ever been involved in. Life assumptions, priorities and perspectives had changed, usually for the better.

For many people it is the best experience they have professionally. It is not always pleasant but it has something to do with meaning—a fundamental shift in life, a changed outlook on life—and growth.

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

However, nearly all interviewed also talked about the challenges involved and costs incurred—for which they were typically unprepared and which support efforts struggled to address.⁶

Anne Leadbeater (from wildfire-affected Kinglake, Victoria) described the journey of disaster recovery as akin to cumulative trauma – like carrying an increasing number of bricks. Before the event you are carrying bricks because life is busy and not without its stressors. Then the event happens and you find yourself carrying extra unexpected bricks. But over time the bricks don't disappear, in fact they just keep getting added – you have extra financial burdens, you worry about your elderly parents and their situation, your insurance company loses your file... and three years later your knees are wobbling under this incredible load which only seems to get heavier. And then the question you are often asked, without understanding your reality, is, "It's been three years, aren't you over it yet?"



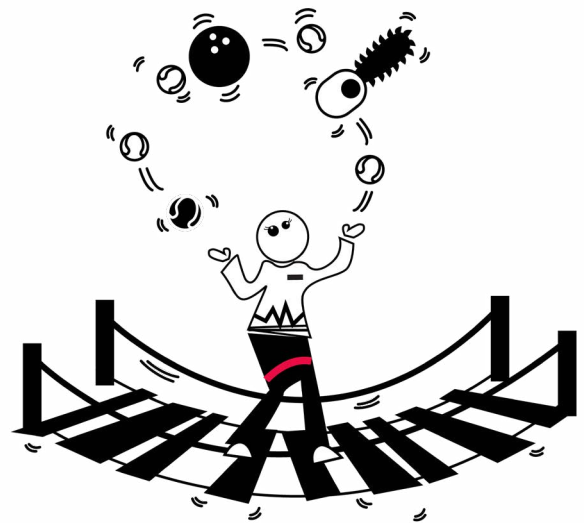
⁶When considering the challenges of working in recovery I suggest donning a hopeful lens - keep in mind that these represent one side of the coin with the positives weighing in on the other side. I have outlined the commonly described challenges to validate their reality, and to identify stressors that could be eliminated. Do not be daunted. Two important stressors described are not being prepared for the challenges of the role, and that others within different parts of, or outside of, the organization did not understand the reality. Examining these stressors is a first step to recognizing and addressing them. The aim is to shift the balance so that the positives and growth that people working in recovery experience shine at the forefront, less tarnished by the weight of the problematic.

This analogy rings true for those with a role in recovery with sentiments expressed akin to... “Yes! That’s it! And you are asked with some kindness if you are looking after yourself so you can last the distance, but then in the same breath three more bricks are handed to you to carry! Or if you are managing your bricks (barely) or have any possible remnants of energy spare you will be thrown more bricks, “here you can have Mary’s too!” If you are struggling then you are judged as not coping or not capable yet the inhumane weight of the load is not given any thought.”

Working in recovery was also described as less about carrying bricks and more about juggling—capturing not just the increased load but the inherent complexity.

In recovery you end up with a whole lot more to juggle than in normal life and then you throw in a bowling ball or a chainsaw and whole range of different things happen. Juggling similar balls you might wobble but once you know the weight you can establish a rhythm. But in recovery things aren’t uniform or expected. The chainsaw represents something of incredible importance that you must get right—that is particularly stressful. There will be things that you drop. You have to recognize this. And you will get stressed about dropping them. In a usual job the environment is known and straight forward. Instead recovery is like juggling and walking across a footpath, over a beach, through a river, next to a cliff.... The recovery environment is always changing and there are threats and surprises. Constancy and certainty is not there.

John Richardson, Australian Red Cross



It is worthwhile exploring exactly what these bricks or juggling items are – to understand how we might support someone who bears the responsibility of carrying this load, but also so that we might avoid adding bricks unnecessarily. The list of stressors are varied and numerous, but interestingly similar across contexts and cultures.

I have outlined the commonly described stressors in three broad categories, as they seemed to fall naturally⁷. The first is the nature of recovery and the role, (of which the individual and organizations they represent have little or no control over— ‘recovery givens’ if you like). The second are stressors related to the individual, over which, with some awareness and tools, the individual can exert some influence. Thirdly are stressors related to organizational practices, under the control and domain of organizations, be they the ‘employing’ organization (inclusive of volunteers and community leaders), funder/partnering organization or recovery authorities.

⁷ There is no pretense at these categories being theoretically sound or that they should usurp already useful ways of considering stressors, nor are the categories neat and tidy – they interact and are in reality much messier than any simplification portrays.

The nature of disaster recovery

Many people reported having worked in challenging fields or roles prior to the disaster, but that disaster recovery is like nothing they've previously encountered - a different beast. Recovery is described as complex, chaotic, overwhelming, all-consuming, novel, ever-changing and relentless. It defies being readily bounded, flowing into and being affected by personal and community life.

Amongst the 'bricks' listed by those interviewed, related to the nature of disaster recovery, were:

- Unpredictability
- Complexity
- The load
- Relentlessness
- The inability to meet the need
- Thankless and unrecognized nature
- Exposure to other people's stories and distress
- The feeling of being an outsider
- Personal links to the community
- The weight of expectations
- The blur between supporting the community and being part of the community
- Juggling your own recovery
- The all-encompassing nature
- 'It could have been me'
- The slings and arrows of life
- Waning support
- Isolation
- Diminished resources

Conscious of the irony of expecting people with little precious time to read an epic tale, I have siphoned off detail about the stressors into the appendices, along with select snippets provided by participants. By stringing together the gems offered up by the wonderful people around the globe who contributed, this report could write itself and be more interesting for it. However, the need to be succinct kept tapping me on the shoulder—my own personal Jiminy Cricket—and so for the sake of brevity I have taken the middle road. But I am a believer in the power of the personal voice so for those who believe too and, like me, feel reticent to silence the voice of others, grab a cuppa, put your feet up and turn to Appendix F to enter the world of those working to support communities recovering from a disaster.

Stress factors at the individual level

The cultural and social drivers that shape the individual level stressors are particularly evident. Personality appears to factor too, as do previous life experiences. Below are a few of the most commonly mentioned stress factors at this level. Appendix G explains these in greater detail and includes insightful reflections from supporters and others.

- Empathic nature
- Giving their all
- Guilt
- A sense of responsibility
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Self-imposed (and culturally shaped) pressure to be strong
- Being new to self-care

Stress factors at the organizational level

Other stressors come from the interactions with organizations themselves. Many of these bricks are both unnecessary and unintentional. Exploring these stressors may provide organizations with an awareness that could allow them to reduce the load on volunteers, community leaders and employees. Below is an overview list, but brief explanations and reflections from supporters and others feature in Appendix H and are well worth reading. Some of these stressors are particular to the 'hosting organization'—the organization to which a member, volunteer or employee belongs, being mindful that depending on whether the person is a volunteer, member, community leader or employee, not all will apply. Other stressors relate also, or particularly to, partnering/funding organizations and state recovery authorities. Interactions with these organizations appears to play a crucial role in adding or lightening the load, particularly for those working at the grassroots. Some stressors will or will not be relevant depending on your particular context.

- The expectation – 'when the going gets tough the tough get going'
- Role modeling
- Judgment
- The need for 'unhinged advocacy'⁸
- The disconnect
- The top-down approach
- Rigidity
- Not feeling valued
- Lacking direction and guidance
- Fast, tangible, siloed, concrete
- Consequences of inappropriate programing
- Political pressures and the speed treadmill
- Business as usual
- Insufficient resourcing
- Lack of training or preparation for supporters
- Workloads
- Additional expectations
- Insincere feeling support
- Inequity of support or recognition
- Inaccessible management
- 'The squeeze' for managers between the needs of teams on the ground and 'higher ups' elsewhere
- Team conflict
- Contracts and uncertainty
- Conditional funding
- Short-term funding
- Reticence to fund personnel

⁸ The strength of advocacy required to sell the need for support and describe the reality to those outside the context left supporters feeling like they came across as uncharacteristically 'unhinged'. See Appendix H for more details.

Why support the supporters?

Argument 1: It pays to support people (cost – benefit)

Purely from a business point of view, contrasting costs and benefits, supporting the supporters is a wise investment. The costs of investing in staff supports—creation of systems, monitoring, support personnel, training, team building and reflection opportunities, advice, adequate resourcing—are dwarfed by the benefits, and would be borne out by any cost-benefit analysis. Also bear in mind that there are many non-measurables that are not readily considered using this model, but would serve to tilt the scales even further in favor of the provision of support. In the words of Kate Riddell (Firefoxes) “How do you put a figure on inspiration and support given to others?”

Staff support leads to reduced turnover, reduced training costs, a more efficient organization, increased job satisfaction, more experienced people in middle management... It is much smarter to train and support your people to be more resilient and understand how to recover from trauma - it is more cost effective. All the indications are that it is a more efficient way of operating... It is a good business model. If you include it then the best work will get done with the best people.

Dr James Guy – Headington Institute

If you have to pay salary for 3-6 months of recovery time, plus recruitment and salary costs of the person replacing, and the costs of psychological care, and if you run down your staff then you are not going to have good results and you are vulnerable to turn over which costs a lot. Versus the costs of establishing a staff care unit and performance goes up, motivation goes up, office team atmosphere improves, staff are healthier, not just the mental health aspects but also physically, you have a happier and healthier office and better quality of work... The numbers stack in favor of staff care.

Johara Boukaa – World Vision

Investment in supporting the supporters avoids costs and yields additional benefits; quality support to those in the community, the ability to be able to sustain this support as needed, achievement toward the mission, integrity of organizational reputation, loyalty, role satisfaction, community trust (a vital asset in the recovery context), happier, healthier and more vibrant people, increased productivity and efficiency, reduced turn over and sick leave costs, reduced ‘treatment’ costs for burnout.... Other benefits include longer lived results in terms of community recovery, increased capacity in the community, gaining an employee (or volunteer) for life, greater organizational capacity, discretionary effort, a sense of pride, drive for excellence, innovation, collaborative and consultative practices, the ability to capitalize on new opportunities, the ability to model health for those we support, the building of resilience and of leaders within the affected communities and within organizations which in turn generate benefits, creating a virtuous cycle...

The benefits are not just the flipside (of what happens if we don't provide support). The difference you can make, the leverage, the increased capacity both for volunteers and for beneficiaries. It makes for a faster recovery, recovery that is long lived and greater longevity means greater resilience. If the workforce is properly supported and enabled they will be more resilient in doing their work and have more opportunities...

Sarah Davidson – British Red Cross

Even if resources are scarce, staff support remains a priority and the principles can be creatively applied. So no matter the budget, in the words of Johara Boukaa (World Vision), “Even a small amount of support has a big impact.”

Argument 2: It's a risky business (risk and scarcity lingo)

Viewed from the lens of risk management, there is a great deal to lose if we fail to provide support to those with a role in recovery (as Appendix J illustrates). Support initiatives are akin to insurance—insuring against damage to the people we are supporting, to our workforce, resources, assets, brand reputation...

If disaster response organizations don't support their people by providing good mental health resiliency training and access to evidence-informed mental health support during and after a disaster, there is a risk to the mission. Clients are not getting served because our workers are experiencing the negative impact of high stress that is not being appropriately addressed.

Sandra Shields - Disaster Mental Health Co-Lead, California, American Red Cross

The risk is that if it is true that the bar for staff care is starting to rise, then you're behind the curve. You lose the best people and you can't recruit the best people. If you have a choice lead the pack, be known for it, be attractive to the best people. You don't want to be behind.

Dr James Guy – Headington Institute

Argument 3: It's just the right thing to do (ethical obligation)

Taking care of the supporters is a responsibility, an obligation and should be in line with your organizational values—particularly if you are a helping agency. Anything less has a tendency to feel like hypocrisy. When ethics and morality are considered, supporting the supporters is simply the right thing to do.

Supporting your workers is just the right thing to do. But that's never the first reason given is it? We always try to tie it to some budgetary reasons to convince people. It will cost you more at the end of the day if you don't. Interviewing, recruiting, hiring, it's less expensive for an agency to take care of its staff than to get new ones every year and a half. ... In some organizations, there is 100% focus on clients and 0% focus on staff and this needs to change.

Diane Ryan – American Red Cross

These people are the finest you will ever meet. It is just the right thing to do. We know what hurts people and what helps them, and it doesn't cost much.

Dr James Guy – Headington Institute

Appendix J provides an overview of interviewees' responses relating to what happens if those with a role in recovery are not adequately supported. Whether motivated by concern for your people, achieving your organizational mission, fiscal prudence or risk management, the answers given by those with firsthand experience in disaster recovery, will give you cause to pause, and hopefully to act.

The knowledge is there, the arguments are made, but still some organizations will not move to support their people. One truly perplexing question remains and I (and many others I met) implore honest scrutiny. Given the arguments above, **why not?**

People hide behind barriers all the time, financial barriers or whatever, and that's horses**t—there are barriers to everything we do and that's what makes these jobs art forms—working out how to get around them with five cents and a piece of fishing wire.

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

12 principles of support

Based upon the exploratory conversations with over 80 people who are playing or have played a role in disaster recovery, these themes, or support principles, came to the fore.⁹ Following the principles are practical tips for implementation based upon the experiences and insights of those who are currently, or have previously been, involved in disaster recovery.

As a prerequisite to the principles, a common message was that organizations, leaders, funders, must understand how disaster recovery differs from usual practice. 'Business-as-usual' (BaU) does not fit the recovery context—like trying to force a square peg into a round hole. Likewise, an appreciation for the complexity, the greyness and the inherent chaos involved in recovery is crucial. Recovery is an iterative process. It evolves. Like most complex social processes—it cannot be predicted, controlled, or rigidly planned.

We need to strike from the lexicon 'business as usual': This is our business now and the usual is what we are having to figure out now.

Anne Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges

If you value ordered and structured and neat, then everyone will fail in their role in recovery. Accept the fact that recovery is messy. Don't impose firm order. Bend and flex a bit.

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

GENUINE

TAILORED

**BUILD
UNDERSTANDING**

LEARN

**ADDRESS THE
LOAD**

PREVENTION

FAIR

FLEXIBILITY

ENGRAINED

**DEDICATED
RESOURCING**

CONNECT

**REFLECT,
CELEBRATE**

⁹ These principles should be considered a first pass at exploring the terrain and not a definitive map.

Genuine

Supporting your people will save you money and enhance your organizational outcomes. However, it is vital that the reason for supporting your people is because it is the right thing to do and is sincerely motivated. The top priority was supporting with warmth. Addressing other needs was considered incredibly helpful it was often said, “The most crucial thing is that the organizations and people who support us genuinely care.”

Putting supports in place solely out of obligation, because it is financially prudent or to reduce risk, may be more hurtful than helpful. The most frequently noted success factor in support initiatives was buy-in right from the top—the belief that supporting our people is valuable in and of itself, because rarely will you find a breed of dedicated, passionate people more deserving of support.

Yes that’s important but more important is concern and care – and listen. Sometimes it feels lonely.

Anon – Ishinomaki, Japan

Tailored

Support starts with asking and listening. People may not ask for the support they need. Do not assume people feel as strong or as capable as they appear, or that you know what they need.

Ask “What do you need?” and then listen, honestly, genuinely and safely—not from a place of judgment about coping or not coping.

Needs will change and vary across individuals and across time. What is helpful for one person or team might not be helpful for another. Asking and listening will help support to be relevant. Be prepared to take, what Kate Riddell from Firefores terms, ‘a buffet approach’ to support, offering different options for different people at different stages.

Ask open-ended questions and do not assume you know how people feel. Lots of mistakes happen when we think we know how people feel.

Louise Steen Kryger - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

We assume people know what they’re doing. This is all new to people. They then don’t question things because people expect they know what they’re doing. We don’t understand what support people might need. They rarely ask for help.

Anon – Ishinomaki, Japan

Staff care looks so different in different places. Different cultures have their own ways of expressing and recovering from stress.

Dr Rick Williamson – Headington Institute

Build Understanding

One the greatest sources of stress for those working in recovery, is the perception that others higher up the chain (within the organization or in funders or recovery authorities) operate from a misaligned understanding of the challenges they face and the realities within the affected communities. It follows then that one of the most effective strategies for supporting those with a role in recovery is creating opportunities to increase the understanding of the faced realities.

You have to go to the team. They feel it acutely when you spend time in a community and in a team—but real quality time—not breezing in and giving an hour. If you can afford the time set up shop so you are around. Formal meetings might occur but what is really beneficial is the informal stuff you are exposed to. Have lunch with people. Listen and feed challenges up the chain—communicate ‘yep we’ve got that’ and keep people informed of the progress. You hold people’s trust and goodwill and let them know you’ve got their best interests at heart—even if you have to come back and say we couldn’t solve it—listen and demonstrate your intention; that engenders goodwill.

John Richardson – Australian Red Cross

Take opportunities to let community leaders know they are not alone—that you are with them. Visit temporary houses and spend time, go to cultural meetings and festivals. And disseminate information about what is happening elsewhere across the country. Be a bridge between affected people and people elsewhere.

Dr Toshiharu Makishima – Japanese Red Cross Medical Center

Learn

As an organization, as managers, as governance, as funders... proactively work to educate yourself in disaster recovery. Develop an understanding of the typical trajectories and challenges faced by communities during long-term recovery, and consider how these might also apply to those with a role in recovery—in their dealings with the community, in attempting to respond to evolving community needs and in terms of their own experience if they are impacted themselves.

Develop an understanding of the psychosocial aspects of recovery, remembering that recovery is foremost about people, so that this lens can helpfully guide all interventions. This will also reduce the need for those working in recovery to educate those 'up the chain' within the organization while they are simultaneously addressing the local need. Developing a common understanding will help with being able to understand the challenges and support the goals those working in recovery are aspiring to.

It was our first time working after a disaster. It was hard because we were learning ourselves. And it was hard because we had to increase the understanding of others. ...Psychosocial programming wasn't known before. A real challenge has been the work we have to do on conversion. We needed to find a language that worked for the different audiences.

Mie Kashiwade – Plan Japan

Education, across all levels, as to the importance of including staff support in the health and safety equation is invaluable. Understand an organization's role in protecting workers (whether voluntary or paid) from the hazards of negative stress, as we would from any other physical hazard. Learn about the science (yes there is plenty of hard evidence) behind promoting resilience and well-being and the mechanisms and impacts of stress.¹⁰

As with any hazard, supporters need to be educated in the risks associated with a role in recovery so they are not unwittingly exposed, then have an awareness of the strategies and tools to minimize risk (both organizational and self-supports) and to understand their own responsibilities in the equation.

Volunteers who do not feel prepared for what they are doing, may be unwillingly and unknowingly exposed. They need to be told of the potential emotional costs. If they know the risks then they can make choices knowingly and be prepared—knowing what they're diving into, the risks, the difficult issues and what they can do to look after themselves.

Louise Steen Kryger – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Education should normalize and create universal expectations regarding prioritizing worker well-being. Think both preventative strategies and strategies to address the negative impacts of stress if they emerge. A key message for the latter is that seeking support is a sign of professionalism and strength, not weakness.

¹⁰ The Headington Institute is one organization who specializes in this science and their website has a wealth of knowledge to inform and guide organizations and individuals. Their website is a good place to start: www.headington-institute.org

Address the load

One of the biggest organizational obstacles is the fallacy that it is all about self-care. Self-care is just one piece. We should be asking, how can we limit the stressors people are being faced with?

Valerie Cole – American Red Cross

Recognize the load being carried, then take steps to lighten it. Identify and deal to the stressors themselves.¹¹ The nature of recovery does create bricks that are unavoidable, but a great many others could be lifted from the pile.

Proactively manage workloads, scale back expectations or scale up resourcing. Provide assistance for administrative tasks. Remove unnecessary hurdles, increase flexibility and reduce complexity to make tasks, processes, and systems less onerous.

Give people time. Nothing is as rushed during recovery as it seems. Put the brakes on for a little while otherwise we end up on this unhealthy treadmill of heightened anxiety and the unsustainable level of activity seen in the response phase is kept alive. We need to be better at asking is this urgent and is this necessary? We need to do the urgent stuff and the necessary stuff, but only the urgent stuff needs to be done quickly. Expectations are not static so own the discourse—rather than exhausting your staff, work to manage the expectations of the public and others. Educate and advocate.

Anne Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges

Program activities need to be realistic. In recovery you need to factor in a third of time for leave, R&R and sickness. ...What capacity is needed? And managing that over time. Ensuring there are HR, finance and logistic staff to support recovery. We shy away from spending money on support costs—but we shouldn't think of it this way. They are not support costs, they are operation costs, as important as the people implementing the projects.

Ted Tuthill – British Red Cross

There is the tendency to fund stuff - but stuff won't be developed or distributed unless you fund staff. There is never a recognized connection between the staff person and the outcomes – just seen as a staff cost. It is difficult to value and measure the impact of staff but they are a huge success factor... And the most crucial recovery worker is the administrative assistant. If community leaders are taking it on, then they need support and resourcing to do it.

John Richardson – Australian Red Cross

I had someone who came and created a blog page and was making updates for me and she maintained the webpage – that helped get our name and information out there and it freed me up to do what I needed to be doing.

Mike Hoffman – Yellow Boots, Staten Island

¹¹ To develop an awareness of the 'bricks' which make up the load Appendices E-G outline those mentioned by people playing a supporting recovery role

We needed flexibility of reporting systems. They wanted to tell the story and be accountable and transparent but we had to work to ensure reporting wasn't a burden and buffer them from donor pressures.

Tohru Shirakawa – JVC

Provide practical support to directly address recovery challenges of those who are simultaneously affected themselves and consider family needs as part of the equation.

Be creative—find out what exactly are the issues they are dealing with. Provide someone to help with forms or provide legal advice, or financial management workshops.

Johara Boukaa – World Vision

Prevention

Consider staff support as something done with the primary purpose of keeping staff happy, healthy, satisfied and functioning well—supporting resilience, rather than patching them up after they are injured. This will involve a fundamental shift in how staff support is viewed and implemented in many organizations.

I know what doesn't work! Letting people get to the point where the systems we have kick in. So I know it doesn't work waiting until someone is showing signs of vicarious trauma and sending them off to a great therapist. That's gone too far.

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

Too often the staff support box is ticked because an employee assistance program (EAP—a counseling service usually accessed by phone) is in place, and worker well-being is deemed at a satisfactory level if workers infrequently use the service. However, EAP may not be the support of choice or the most effective option for many who require support¹² and uptake is not a good measure of workforce well-being. This isn't to say that EAP is not a valid support if offered as one of a range of options. Support to those harmed as a result of their involvement is vital, but to equate supporting those with a role in recovery to curative fixes is inadequate. Support works best when focused on promoting and maintaining well-being—not limited to addressing ill health.

Conceptualize the stress of people working in recovery as you would hygiene. There we have the conceptual understanding that we wash our hands not because we feel dirty. Same with stress – self-care and support needs to be routinized, not based on when we feel stressed.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

¹² UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNHCR's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for staff, 29 July 2013, PDES 12/2013, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/520a40e34.html> [accessed 13 February 2014]

Fair

Ensure access to support is equitable—within and across teams. Leaving levels of support entirely up to the discretion and abilities of their leader may result in varying standards of support. This can lead to division; those feeling unsupported feel resentment and those being supported, or leading the way doing the supporting, are made to feel guilty. The manager is often put in an untenable position; “Am I supposed to give my team less support, when I know they need it, in order to make it fair?”

An organization-wide defined level of support would address equity concerns, but would strip away the discretion required to ensure supports are responsive. Striking a balance might entail having an organization-wide minimum standard which ensures a good level of support, while encouraging additional discretionary flexibility.

Ensure equity of support over time. Needs are on-going and changing. Different people will benefit from different supports at different times—support Sue at month 10, but also plan to be able to continue to provide support so that it is still available when it is helpful to Geoff at year 3.

Providing continuity of access to support over time is important, including beyond the immediate end of the role. Enabling multiple options for follow up support beyond an initial debrief is valuable, as the impact may only emerge later. Workers can become so invested and embedded in their helping role that processing it and letting go can be a challenge that takes time. Finding new meaning and purpose is key for longer term adjustment and re-integration.

Kate Minto – Mandala Foundation

Ensure equity across organizations. Recovery authorities and funders/partnering organizations can help to ensure critical grassroots supporters have fair access to support. Community-level organizations are essential to community recovery, yet inequity in resourcing means an uneven playing field with regards to opportunities to support their people. There is a great deal that can be done to support staff, volunteers and community leaders with minimal financial investment, but this neglects to acknowledge that small organizations are already high on tasks and responsibilities and low on time and energy.

Consider too those who play an essential role in supporting community recovery in roles not traditionally deemed disaster recovery related, such as teachers or business owners.

We need a more balanced way to support recovery. The role of businesses in local groups is not acknowledged—businesses play a huge role in the rural community on committees. We are part of the foundation blocks. We help instill hope back into people.

Brad Quilliam – Kinglake Ranges Business Network

Government services will not cater for the entire population. People will see aroma-therapists and chiropractors, and others in alternative medicine. But there is a load on these people without (disaster recovery-related) training and qualifications and they don't have access to supports—we also need to provide a system around them.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Flexibility

Clarity in direction, boundaries and objectives is important, but works best when accompanied with the autonomy and flexibility to shape the support within these limits using the benefit of local knowledge.

Many yearn for trust in local perceptions and the flexibility to be able to respond to local needs using local knowledge. Yet those who are completely unfettered, with little guidance and direction, feel discounted and isolated.

I think the importance of structure with flexibility is good. You need to take the time to plan but it being flexible planning. The idea is of it being like a travel guide rather than an instruction manual. At least with a travel guide you can think okay this is where we are going, this is what we may or may not see and if we do see that then we can... Having that type of approach rather than too structured and directive.

John Richardson – Australian Red Cross

Accompanied with clear role objectives, flexibility of working hours and conditions, especially for those juggling recovery and other demands outside their role, was noted as immeasurably helpful.

Apply the idea of people-centered to the workplace not just clients. I am having to build a house and working as well. If I said I've got this personal stuff going on – having the flexibility of hours and time to deal with personal stuff means the difference between working and not working.

Sylvia Thomas – Community On Ground Assistance, Kinglake

Engrained

Rather than a tick-box exercise, or a siloed role, make worker support part of how your organization lives and breathes. Ensure that support of your people becomes a non-negotiable basic, as is health and safety or non-prejudice practices. Make it part of your culture and your language. This comes from the top, and from making it an expectation of everybody in the organization. Find ways to measure the well-being of your people and include promotion and protection of workforce well-being in the role descriptions and key performance indicators (KPIs) of senior leadership and those who have direct reports. In doing so, remember that supporting your people will increase your effectiveness in relation to your mission, not compete with or detract from it.

Have structures in place. For example, you are only allowed to volunteer x hours per week or work this amount of time.... If you work more than that then you need recuperation and you need to take time off, and ensure the resourcing to make this possible. This is protecting people—it is not about their capability. It is a system so that volunteers or staff do not feel pitied or nursed, it is just how it is, for everyone.

Louise Steen Kryger – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

It has to come from the top. It sets a precedence for the rest of the company and what their values are. I think it has to be a value. And that value has to inform the actions and what management instill. That managers take care of each other and managers take care of their staff. It really comes right from the top. And if the CEO doesn't believe in it, it trickles...

Kerry Symons - Visiting Nurse Service of New York

Dedicated Resourcing

Supporting the supporters operates much like health and safety often does within an organization; it is everybody's responsibility, considered in all we do, but to be most effective there are roles dedicated to creating and supporting the framework, expectations and systems, for raising awareness, providing training, monitoring levels and measuring the effectiveness of initiatives put in place. Likewise, staff support needs to be both systematically integrated and simultaneously attributed its own space with dedicated roles, resourcing and processes.

Building relationships, trust and an understanding of the local situation is a critical success factor of a dedicated staff support person. A dedicated person assigned by a funder across their funded organizations could play this role if it was clear that their role was to support worker well-being rather than representing any other funder agenda. In larger organizations, Human Resources might play a role, as it does for British Red Cross.

If there is no identified person looking at this... In the absence of anyone being identified to take care of people then they will just keep working.

Ted Tuthill – British Red Cross

Second someone to the team with the role of staff support; holding the staff welfare in mind with a good understanding of the work.

John Richardson – Australian Red Cross

It's not tacked onto someone's role. It's given credence with its own role.

Mike Hoffman – Yellow Boots, Staten Island

Connect

Create connection opportunities for supporters in order to normalize struggles, offload frustrations with those who understand, and to problem solve. Build connections;

- within the team and the organization,
- with peers facing similar challenges from other organizations,
- with professional supervisors
- with those who have previous lived experience of a role in disaster recovery

So often a role in recovery feels daunting because of the uncharted nature, lonely because of the isolating nature and fraught because our frame of reference by which to judge success is unfitting. People with a role in recovery are usually new to it and knowing that the untidiness, mixed realities that they see are par for the course, and that their stress reactions may be indicative of the load and not their personal capabilities can be a huge relief. To know you are human, that you are not failing, that you are doing a great job in trying circumstances—these are vital messages and we hear them best from others who are performing similar roles or have experienced recovery previously. These connections also enable the perspective, experience and knowledge of others to be brought to bear in efforts to address current challenges.

A colleague contacted me because she needed to talk to someone who she knew had 'been there'. I listened to her vent because I knew exactly what she was talking about and she felt understood. Different disaster, but similar culture and similar issues occurred.

Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross

As time goes on and their sense of helplessness as to outcomes for survivors increases, they get mingled up and cannot separate themselves from what is happening. Having an external person, outside of the area to be their supporter helps—they know where they are standing, they have the long-term perspective and they know what they might be yet to face.

Dr Tomoko Osawa – Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress, Kobe

I am lucky to have around me a large number of specialists with previous experience who supported me and kept me going. That support is still there for me now. These people are not necessarily with me but even knowing they are there if I need them is a great support.

Akiko Sasaki – Ishinomaki Red Cross Hospital

Reflect, Celebrate

Create opportunities for time away and for reflection, both as individuals (or families) and as a team. Time away from the disaster-impacted environment is vital to help people keep in touch with a normal frame of reference and prevent them from becoming consumed by the recovery realities. Build in time for reflection. As recovery lacks defined progress points or signposts to success, this time needs to be consciously created.

It is uncharted territory—a new science. It is a marathon with no end in sight. At some stage we might stop running but we have no experience of feeling we've reach the end, no feeling of accomplishment. We don't know when we are at the half way mark. There are no defined milestones, no finishing line. We risk running and running and running until we die. So we need to artificially build in milestones as time to reflect and celebrate.

Anne Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges

Have the opportunity for the team to get together and have planning. Time out to reflect and get a little bit of distance. This is normally present in a workplace that isn't as deeply involved as you are when working in recovery. So we need to consciously structure this in after disasters.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Value and recognize contributions and efforts. Most people working in recovery do not do it for the thanks, however, without positive feedback in some form, their involvement is personally depleting.

Praising others isn't part of our culture—we are polite but quiet, but acknowledgment is important. We had a board member, a lawyer, tell the team, "You did a great job and we really appreciate what you have done, not just for the children there, but for our organization." It was hard won praise and it was sincere and it meant a lot.

Mie Kashiwade – Plan Japan

Find opportunities to celebrate successes to enable people to continue to feel motivated, realize the impacts and worth of their efforts, and retain perspective.

Success stories help. They get so much negative feedback... Success stories help keep in perspective the amazing work they've done. Because the complaints are smaller than the successes but typically the complaints are the things they tend to remember. ...The client who sent a thank you letter or got financial assistance. It's an important emphasis. It's important to see the little things and the impact they have. Celebrate those successes. You have to work to help people to take a step back to look at the good that is happening in amongst so much bad.

Anon - New York

After 9-11 we had a snapshot of the week, the moment that put a smile on your face and shared a few of these amongst the team which let us walk out with an image of a good moment. Because recovery is a big and never-ending process, we need people to hold onto the little moments.

Anon - New York

Supporting those with a role in disaster recovery

In this section you'll find tips for implementing the 12 principles - bringing together generously shared suggestions and learning about what worked and what didn't.

12 Principles of support

Top tips for implementation

Additional tips for...

Team leaders

Senior management & governance

Human resource personnel

Funders

Plus messages for those with a role in recovery

Tips are derived from learned experiences, insights and shared wisdom of those who have previously or are currently playing a role in supporting communities during the long-term recovery following a disaster. The quotations used have been selected from a multitude of similarly expressed direct messages with the varied audiences in mind. For example, interviewees were asked "With providing support for those with a role in disaster recovery in mind, what message would you give to team leaders?"

If you'd like help implementing the principles and providing practical support to the supporters after disaster, Hummingly has created workshops and tools to help.

www.hummingly.co

Top tips for implementation

Generated from the experience and insights of those who have experienced working in recovery, these tips provide guidance for the implementation of the 12 principles – the ‘how’ of supporting those with a role in recovery.

Following will be more specific messages to various audiences, which are additional to these implementation tips.

Connect

Connection provides the opportunity to express frustrations, share challenges, consider strategies for problem solving, advocate in numbers, and share information, knowledge and resources. Sources of support, encouragement and recognition of commonality of experience are created. Connection enables the diffusion of stress through off-loading, sound-boarding, normalizing what is occurring and gaining perspective.

Informal opportunities for people to connect, in addition to structured, task-focused opportunities are invaluable. Encourage those with a role in recovery to form personal support structures comprising of those they connect with who understand their realities. Multiple and varied types of connections are most helpful.

With those who have been there before:

- Practical first-hand experience of a role in disaster recovery was noted as important. Guidance, knowledge, perspective, and external support from those who’ve experienced the practical realities and understand the challenges involved was valued.
- This might be done by bringing in people with previous experience as speakers, as deliverers of training, as consultants, or through one-on-one connection face-to-face or via phone or video calls. Connection might occur regularly or on-hand and sought as challenges arise, or events with local impact occur.
- The person who has been there before needn’t be an ‘expert’. Linking a front office shire council staff member with someone who performed a similar role in a previous event might be as, if not more, useful.
- Choose wisely as the title of recovery expert is oft claimed.

For Peter Miller and the team at the World Trade Center Survivors’ Network, their most useful support was the connection made with an equivalent survivors’ network from the Oklahoma City bombing who understood their challenges, offered support and suggested strategies based upon experience.

With peers – Create opportunities for connection with others in similar roles, facing similar challenges, both within and outside your organization.

Team building - Efforts to bring teams together will pay dividends. Teams can be a source of invaluable support during times of challenge, or if stress is rife, the resulting interpersonal conflict adds to the strain. Prioritize regular team building time. Embrace the informal by conducting regular meetings in a novel, fun environment, encourage social functions, team competitions, weird hat day...

Individual one-on-one supports: Methods might include or be a combination of:

- 'Buddies' – Creating a buddy system so that everybody has someone, whether within or outside the team, to off-load with and someone who will check in with and look out for them.
- Mentors – from within or outside the organization.
- Professional supervision – Whilst common in the areas of nursing, psychology or social work; those working in disaster recovery in other roles from front-desk administration to project lead, can also benefit from the professional supervision model.

Educate

Education prepares supporters for the challenges involved and provides knowledge and tools to perform their role and safeguard their well-being. It can take many forms including compulsory induction, workshops, regular team development sessions, and sector-wide education sessions. Ideally education begins prior to commencing a role and then is ongoing, but is helpful even for those further down the track.

Education should include the likes of:

- I. The biology of stress (normalizing stress responses) and tools to support well-being
- II. Disaster recovery concepts - typical trajectories, community processes, complexity, psychosocial recovery and useful messaging, tools and strategies to support well-being and manage stress which can be used in their role with communities
- III. Realistic expectations – preparation for possible anger and frustration reactions from residents, and knowing what is feasible in terms of expected achievements
- IV. Role boundaries – a clear understanding of the role, including aims, limits, issue escalation referral pathways and supports, and their place in someone’s recovery, for example a rescuer/fixer versus a supporter
- V. Local awareness – development of a local cultural understanding, including an appreciation of the heterogeneous nature of the communities, local priorities and sensitivities

Market education sessions in relation to benefits to the disaster-affected residents, because those with a role in recovery are more likely to prioritize their valuable time with those they support in mind.

Enlist an experienced and well respected person from within or without the team—someone venerated for their skills and knowledge, who is willing to share their personal cautionary tale of negative stress impacts. It is incredibly powerful to know that these impacts can happen to someone who is amazing at what they do and is not a function of weakness or ineptitude. This allows people to feel able to professionalize looking after themselves, admitting their limitations and putting their hand up for support if needed.

And I have been doubting and blaming myself and thinking that I am weak. Now you are telling me that other people feel these things too? I realize now that I am human. I feel like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders.

Nobuko Kamata - Japan

During induction have staff shadow others, attend community meetings, read reports to gain an understanding before getting let loose. Take time to develop a cultural understanding and realistic expectations of the reality including preparing themselves for the level of anger they might experience. Have them go into the community, volunteer on people’s blocks, hear from locals first-hand about their challenges. Take time to understand the culture and understanding the complexity is so important.

Greg Ireton – Advisor, Victorian Government

Systemize support for the supporters

Ideally, if we consider the disaster cycle, we should include team support right at the beginning in planning and practicing for disasters before they occur. In the words of Diane Ryan from American Red Cross, “That way you don’t have to build the plan while you are doing recovery work, just modify it.” Regardless of whether you find yourself pre- or post-disaster a systemic approach to supporting those within or linked to your organization is recommended.

Develop support processes and systems, from screening and induction of staff and volunteers, and fatigue management practices through to follow up after someone exits the organization. Plan and resource support so that it will continue to be accessible over time, acknowledging that community recovery is a protracted process. Consider too, exit and career planning advice and after-role follow up support as impacts of the role may linger or become evident afterwards. Organizations such as the Antares Foundation, the Headington Institute, and the Mandala Foundation specialize in advising as to how to go about this.

Assessment of the success of a recovery program needs to include a measure of how well the organization supported its workers.

As part of your organizational culture and language remove any unhelpful self-sacrifice or tough ‘John Wayne’ expectations; reduce stigma or punitive reactions to discussing limitations or stress reactions. View staff support, self-care and help-seeking behavior as indications of professionalism, not weakness. Make it uncomfortable for people to not look after themselves or their team, rather than the status quo of it being uncomfortable to consider their own needs. Be proud to be an organization that values and supports its people. Advocate, educate and lead the way. It should not be something to keep under wraps with the public or with donors, but an example of your ethics and your belief in doing the right thing, by your people, but also ultimately by the people you serve.

Don’t be ashamed of it, trade on it. Being ethical, valuing people, is attractive.

Dr James Guy – Headington Institute

A dedicated role for staff support is required. With operational pressures and in the face of unmet need, it is too easy to lose sight of the priority of worker well-being, and in the words of Ted Tuthill (British Red Cross), “It is easier to start well rather than do the catch up.” The ideal is to embed the person within the team so they are known, and are therefore approachable and they understand the environment, context and challenges. Issues are then more likely to be brought up as they arise, without being probed and without creating a distant formal process that workers and volunteers are unlikely to engage with.

Address the load

Ensuring loads carried by the supporters are feasible is a vital method of support. The complexity and difficulty of the recovery environment may render pre-disaster determinants of work or caseloads void. Proactively manage workloads and scale back expectations or if resourcing allows, scale up resources. Other ways to lighten the load for supporters include:

- I. Ensure adequate staffing for project implementation, administration and core-support services (I.T., Communications, etc.)
- II. Ensure support structures, such as I.T., Communications, H.R., Finance etc., reduce load rather than inadvertently add to it. This requires acknowledgment of the need for flexibility in a non-business-as-usual environment and a responsiveness to the complexity and needs of the recovery context
- III. Adapt and simplify systems and processes to make them less onerous and more applicable to recovery
- IV. Find creative means, such as seconding people or enlisting professional volunteers, to assist with tasks such as I.T., marketing, media management, funding applications, reporting, and administration, freeing the supporters up to do what they do best
- V. Take a holistic view when seeking opportunities to lighten the load
 - The individual often felt torn between the needs of families (many related to the disaster) and the demands of their role supporting others. Include families in education sessions, provide them information and extend support beyond the individual to the family to minimize this added stress.
 - Provide practical support to directly address their recovery challenges of those who are affected themselves.

We need a model where there are people in a position to work alongside you and when the phone rings with something they can handle they can say, "I'll do it". It is important that they don't take over from you but they are there to support you and pick up the slack. Someone a bit detached with some clarity can sometimes be helpful. They'd have to be the right person but those people are out there, that have empathy, are efficient and have amazing clarity.

Fiona Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges

Adapt systems. For example reports, talk through reports on the phone as they are driving and type it for them.

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

In Christchurch, St John (ambulance) provided such a service to address recovery challenges for their staff and volunteers. Their ambulance officers were making critical decisions as part of their role while carrying huge pressures relating to their own insurance, relocation, rebuild, zoning or repair dilemmas, along with relationship issues, children struggling to cope and living in substandard housing. Providing counseling support, though helpful for some, was not addressing the cause of the problem. Expertise was brought in to project manage individual claims; to provide insurance law advice, structural engineering and a myriad of other specialist resources required to navigate the claims pathway. The service was deemed successful by the organization and considered great value for the investment.

Reflect, Celebrate

Because recovery is relentless and all-consuming it is very easy to lose perspective and to become overwhelmed and exhausted. One of the best tonics is reflection time—particularly time away is particularly vital to help people keep in touch with a normal frame of reference and prevent them from becoming consumed by the recovery realities. Sponsoring or supporting breaks away – using leverage to arrange holiday homes that volunteers, community leaders or staff can use without eating into their leave or finances would be one example. Providing regular opportunities to recharge and refresh will help retain energy and motivation over the duration of the recovery journey.

People are more likely to feel able to take a needed break if they feel reassured that provisions have been made to continue their work while they are away, otherwise returning to a compounded workload will add to rather than reduce stress.

Both individual and team opportunities for reflection are vital.

Build in a retreat to discuss successes, challenges, provide three meals and a massage, have time to laugh, play nonsense games. Laughter is as cathartic as crying. Every so many months have a retreat so that workers can reflect, replenish and then plan for the next so many months. But you need to build it in. Term it planning and replenishment. Replenishment is the most important, but it is harder to sell, so sell it as planning, but spend most of the time on re-energizing and then use the creative energy to throw around ideas and plan on the last day.

Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross

Acknowledgment and recognition that is meaningful and sincere in its delivery can take many forms. It needn't be public awards or trumpeting of accomplishments as many are humble and do not seek the spotlight. Whether it is a thank you, a plaque, vouchers for a meal out, tickets to events... find out what might be meaningful. Recognition is not a box to tick but is sincerely motivated and continues over time.

Celebrating success is particularly vital when demands are relentless, there is little control over outcomes and feedback is often disconcerting. People in helping roles are often motivated to make a difference, but tend to fixate on the outstanding, often overwhelming, need. This is a function of their propensity to care. We all need positive feedback so that we know our efforts count for something. Celebrating successes can be instigated at all levels and be done in a myriad of different ways.

Team leaders: Additional tips

Over and above the '12 principles of support' and 'Top tips for implementation' these are the additional points interviewees made with team leaders in mind.

Look after yourself and lead by example – one of the best ways to support your team. Managing your own stress through self-care and healthy work practices will enable you to be more available to your team.

Your work behaviors play a role in setting the expectations and culture for your team. Model healthy habits and create an expectation of realistic work hours and encourage work being left at work rather than seeping further into the home realm. Allow your team members to feel empowered to defend their 'out of hours' time from work encroachment.

We were never told to keep business business and don't let it creep into your personal life. It would've been good to have been told not to email in the evenings and to turn your phone off. Supervisors have their phones and they send emails so we feel we should too, but we need some time to de-stress.

Emily Gonzalez – Federation Employment and Guidance Service, Long Island

Ensure the support that workers provide others does not come at the expense of their own recovery. Don't keep asking more of people because they will keep responding, despite the load.

When I was clinical supervisor of the earthquake response in Santa Cruz, California '89 earthquake I was very conscious of a person who had a damaged home and ended up ensuring she took time off—not in a punitive way but in a way which made it okay for her to focus on her own needs. It had been a long time and she hadn't spent any time with her husband, or sorting out the fixing of her own home.

Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross

Supporters may experience the same psychosocial processes as the community they support. It follows then that frustration, reduced tolerance and tiredness are likely over time, with implications both for the individuals and for the team. Know also that the biology of chronic stress will translate to a negative impact on performance. Being aware of these realities better allows us to recognize challenges for what they are and provide support, rather than prematurely attributing them to an individual's capabilities. Proactive management of team dynamics, loads and energy levels will assist to ameliorate and alleviate this process.

Prepare your team well. Where possible this occurs before a disaster with an understanding as to how roles will change should there be a disaster, in both the short and long-term. Even after the disaster, screenings, inductions, briefings, training and regular effective communication can assist with preparation for the rigors of the role. Aim for having the right people with the right skills and the right motivations in the right roles, with clear understanding of their roles and the objectives. From a base of having good workers with sound expectations, clear direction, and adequate supports, the team can then be empowered with trust, flexibility and autonomy to responsively support the communities.

Know your team. Invest time—one on one, face to face. Get to know each individual; their family needs, their life goals, their ways of working and the challenges they are facing outside work, especially if they are also disaster-impacted. Your team members may not always ask for support when they need it. Stress can impact the ability for people to gauge their own tiredness levels and needs. If you know your team well then you can 'listen' for signs of stress, which will only be evident if you know how the person usually operates and responds.

Be approachable. This is not only about being available but also being a safe and supportive person to discuss concerns with—the feeling that you are 'in their corner.' Create an environment which promotes open discussion and admission of the stress encountered and which encourages accessing support when required.

Observe. Observing is very important. Know your staff member—not only their capability work-wise but their private lives if that is possible. Know that person as a whole. If it is not possible, know someone who does.

Dr Tomoko Osawa – Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress

Get to know them well. If they are not coping well you won't see it first necessarily in their work. But the thing you see in them might be different. Know what's going on in their life. You cannot manage solely by performance indicators.

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

Having a hard time in this doesn't make us weak or damaged, just human.

Lisa Orloff – World Cares Center

Act as a buffer from pressures and from unnecessary minutia or bureaucracy. Work to slow the pace to that which is sustainable, despite the pressures to the contrary.

As a team leader or manager your role is to run interference so your people can do their work. Act as a protective shield from political pressures or trivial stuff so they can keep focused on what's important.

John Richardson – Australian Red Cross

Speed and volume. Hit the brake once in a while.

Louise Steen Kryger – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies PS Center

'Debrief' – using this term loosely. Essentially this means creating regular opportunities for teams to reflect, raise challenges, share ideas and resources, continuously tweak practice, defuse tension, acknowledge contributions and success and retain focus.

It is about creating a safe space to do this and the hygiene of it. If it is not at the end of each day then the end of the week. Create rituals so that it happens and not waiting for negative things to happen to then do it. It could only take ten minutes or it could take an hour.

Sarah Davidson – British Red Cross

We discuss each person's low and high of the week. They can express whatever level frustration but also to point out that there is good in the work that they do.

Kerry Symons - Visiting Nurse Service of New York

Create a pleasant work environment – acknowledging that this can be challenging with the degree of disruption to office facilities and so may require a creative approach. A strategy which found merit in numerous locations involved creating a physical space, set aside for staff and/or volunteers to retreat to, to share issues, to take a break and to recharge.

The team was asked what else would help them and one of the ideas was a cafeteria or outdoor eating space – a really nice inviting space. There is no place to sit away from the desk. It would be nice to have somewhere to sit, away from your desk and our email and be able to relax with others from your team and not talk about work over lunch.

Emily Gonzalez – Federation Employment and Guidance Service

Create a space to stop and take a breath. It says that it's okay to have fun and helps people overcome the guilt of being a survivor needing to meet their own needs.

Mie Kashiwade – Plan Japan

Well-being boosters. Amassing a supply of mini-break vouchers to provide free opportunities for workers to take a break and practice self-care was found helpful. The secret was having a range to meet the varied needs and preferences of the team (such as massage vouchers, pool passes, movie tickets, passes to sporting events, meal vouchers, comedy tickets). The vouchers can be given out at random, or made available after a particularly hard day or in acknowledgment of efforts. Approaching corporations can assist with sourcing vouchers at little or no expense.

Governance/senior leadership: Additional tips

When supporting the supporters in disaster recovery, these are the additional points interviewees made with governance and senior leadership in mind. They serve as additional pointers, over and above the '12 principles of support' and 'Top tips for implementation'.

Employees look to the organization for more than their employment – the workplace is more than a team of people with a connected organizational vision and linked roles. It serves as a community. There is clarity as to employer responsibility should workers be hurt on the job. However, when your workforce has faced collective trauma, unrelated to the job, but which affects their well-being and all aspects of their life including work, then it is worth considering what role the organization might play in supporting the recovery of its own people. What recovery challenges do your people and their families face? How might your organization be able to provide support and/or contribute to addressing these concerns?

The workplace is a community and provides many other things beyond an occupation – culture, social, and identity. Research shows the most effective form of delivery of support services after 9-11 was workplace supports, used more readily than community services.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery¹³

Spend time immersed and exposed to the realities on the ground – Put time aside to be present, offer to help in practical ways, listen, watch and learn. Create opportunities to keep the supporters, and the challenges they face, on your radar. For example, nominate a liaison person whose role is to keep it front and center for you.

Practice realism – Recognize that recovery is messy, unlikely to progress as planned, and that business-as-usual practices and expectations are unrealistic. Appreciating efforts, accepting how demoralizing the bumps and swerves can be for the supporters, who are often their own worst critics, and learning from rather than judging missteps, will go a long way to reducing the stress of the supporters.

I like to say everything is 'gooshy', like an amoeba. It never stays in a constant state.

Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross

I am so grateful to my board. Our success comes from the fact that they supported me to lead, to grow and make mistakes, knowing that I would be a harder critic on myself than anyone else could be.

Lisa Orloff – World Cares Center

¹³ North CS1, Pfefferbaum B, Hong BA, Gordon MR, Kim YS, Lind L, Pollio DE. (2013) Workplace response of companies exposed to the 9/11 World Trade Center attack: a focus-group study. *Disasters*. Jan;37(1):101-18

Long-term approach – Sufficient resourcing for a long-term approach should be a requisite for considering and implementing recovery initiatives. This includes delivery personnel, long-term funding and administrative and operational supports and personnel support components. Recovery does not end in the financial year.

If you are planning to do it for one year then have the ability to do it for three. As agencies, wherever possible, refuse twelve months' funding; unless you, the funder, make it three years we're not going to do it.

John Richardson – Australian Red Cross

Advocate to reduce pressures on those working in recovery – be they political or public pressures regarding speed, unrealistic expectations or a premature return to business as usual. Put the brakes on. Ensuring that recovery programming occurs in a considered manner and in a format that staff and volunteers will be able to sustain over time will involve consciously slowing down the pace. This may mean proactively owning and challenging the discourse. With courage and leadership, play a role in educating and challenging others when expectations are unrealistic.

Support of managers – Ensuring managers within the organization are not over-burdened, are not promoted beyond their comfort levels, and are given support to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to support their teams, will in turn contribute to the well-being of your people. If these managers are locally-based, they too may require additional support.

Acknowledge the efforts of, and provide support to, all those involved in interacting with the public in the long-term post-disaster environment, not only those with a recovery-specific role.

Play bad cop to the team's good cop – Locally based teams often live within the communities they support and unpopular decisions or choices can have devastating and wide-reaching impacts for local staff. Protect your teams wherever possible by being the face of the unpopular decisions or unforeseen negative outcomes.

Front the tough decisions in the community so that they are not attributed to local staff.

Greg Ireton – Advisor, Victorian Government

Communication – within your organization is always important. In the recovery context it is even more so, yet it is challenging to do well. Allow for the impacts of stress, which makes message absorption more difficult. Use varied methods, a multitude of times.¹⁴ Clearly articulate reasons for decisions and progress on issues, even if news is not positive.

¹⁴ Some helpful tips can be found in: Australian Red Cross. (2010) Communicating in Recovery. Carlton, Vic: Australian Red Cross

If you are remote you need very good communication both up and down the chain to keep people aware of what's going on so things don't disappear into a black hole only to emerge a few months later. If fed up the chain let them know, "Yep we've got that," and keep people informed on progress. You hold people's trust and goodwill if you let them know you've got their best interests at heart. Even if you have to come back and say, "We couldn't solve it," you've demonstrated your intention and that engenders goodwill. It is difficult to do it well.

John Richardson – Australian Red Cross

Communication within the agency. It is easy said and difficult done. But a conscious effort is needed or things go wrong so easily.

Dr Tomoko Osawa – Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress

Make it okay for your people not to 'be you'

Some organizations are led by CEOs who embody that leader who is one in a million. They don't have to sleep. They have a nuclear generator of hope inside and can carry an organization with their charisma. But if this is held up as the model for everyone else, then turn over is high. You cannot expect that of everyone else. Those kind of role models are organizational bricks. It's about making it okay for everyone else not to be you. Have realistic expectations and give people permission to have the limitations they have. Then you can honor the honest efforts of everyone else.

Dr James Guy – Headington Institute

Human Resource personnel: Additional tips

When supporting the supporters in disaster recovery, these are the additional points interviewees made with Human Resource personnel in mind.¹⁵ They serve as additional pointers, over and above the '12 principles of support' and 'Top tips for implementation'.

Develop an understanding of disaster recovery and how this translates to teams.

Understand the typical recovery trajectories and stages. Consider how these stages also apply to those working in a post-disaster environment, with implications for team dynamics and support. Anger, fear and frustration from team members and resulting conflict are often a function of intense or cumulative stress—a survival/defense mechanism. No one is immune to stress.

Down the track you get the fatigue element, which leads people to be irritable and short tempered and therefore less tolerant. Friction needs managing carefully and sensitively. The emotional climate gets very tatty in the second and third year, people get quite reactive.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Work to understand the local context and to form relationships and establish trust with staff and volunteers. Second an HR person to the team with a dedicated role of team support. An embedded role within the team is preferred. If embedding is not possible, find other ways to become a member of the team; attend meetings, come to retreats and planning days.

It doesn't help to be forced to do things we are not ready for so establish a relationship. For people to take time out needs trust and an established relationship so they will listen and not feel like it is another organizational demand. Have HR close, a representative close to the team and have them have a good sense of what is happening for the team.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Include staff well-being in all HR or occupational health and safety processes and policies. The post-disaster HR policy needs to encompass a fatigue management system. Employ multiple fatigue management methods such as healthy work hour limits, breaks, extra leave, diversity of tasks to limit time spent on the challenging aspects of the role, rotating or seconding staff out. Mandate extra leave in recognition of the stress of their role and in recognition of their own recovery-related challenges so that annual leave can be taken to refresh and maintain well-being as intended. Make certain leave is taken, and taken before the point of exhaustion. Ensure resourcing is in place so that people feel confident to step away from their projects or work as needed.

¹⁵ A useful reference for HR personnel supporting teams post-disaster is: Nilakant, K., Walker, B., Rochford, K., van Heugten, K. (2014). Leading in a Post-disaster setting: Guidance for human resource practitioners. New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations, 38, 1-13

At the coal face you need to rest before you are exhausted. If exhausted your ability to recoup energy is less. Otherwise, the first third of leave is spent having migraines or the flu etc and is wasted. The intuitive sense is to take leave when you are exhausted. If you get to minus ten in terms of energy and take leave you get back to zero, but as soon as you are working again you are already eating up your reserves. If you take leave before exhaustion, say at minus five and get to plus five, then you have at least built up some reserves.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

You need extra leave for people working in recovery regardless if living it or not, but it is particularly pertinent for those living it. There should be a policy of extra leave for people who have been through a disaster. After all there is family violence leave, bereavement leave.... But also for people who work in it. So if you live it and work in it you get both.

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

Additional support to leaders ‘feeling the squeeze’ – Team leaders and managers have a responsibility for supporting the well-being of their teams. However, during disaster recovery team leaders and managers also ‘feel the squeeze’ and will need encouragement and support to keep worker well-being front and center.

Assist team leaders with drafting role profiles and screen and select staff carefully with role boundaries, challenges and stress-management in mind. Match people carefully to roles. Help team leaders to prioritize time for planning, team building, reflection and the celebration of successes.

HR could be the people who keep an eye on the fact that the teams have opportunities to stop, meet and reflect on a regular basis and that these don’t get pushed aside for operational activity, i.e. someone who could come in to run debriefs.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Act as a broker. Support volunteers and staff with basic, practical needs. Link to information, resources and support.

Keep asking ‘If we had to do this over again how might we have inducted, trained or supported you? What else did you need? What could we do differently?’ and continually shape the processes and plug the gaps.

Tell us what is an issue. HR can be like a broker, knowing who to go to, linking to resources, creating capacity that way.

Katie Barnett – British Red Cross

Lead the way, and bring in support – build partnerships with the likes of public health or university researchers to help create monitoring instruments or a cost-benefit case for staff support.

Assess and track staff and volunteer well-being and measure effectiveness of supports put in place—knowing that maintaining well-being (let alone increasing it) is a sign of success.

If support is working it doesn't look like anything at all. It is a pleasant conversation once a month, but if you stop it then the problems build up.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Bend and flex HR processes. Flexibility with regard to working hours and conditions was considered incredibly important, such as being able to work around rebuild/repair appointments, home relocations or family commitments, the option to start later after attaining little sleep, the opportunity to work days from home if helpful.

Know that if you have selected good workers, most people working in recovery will be dedicated and the focus will need to be on ensuring they do not overwork rather than underwork. Therefore, if you select staff well, you can have confidence that you can grant flexibility of working hours and conditions with trust.

Don't wait for things to be put in writing. Exempt people from having to do this. Speed up processes, add in flexibility... flexibility re discretionary leave, and practical recognition. For example, an afternoon off and time to regroup when needed.

John Richardson – Australian Red Cross

Look for the good worker. This is particularly true when you're not sure what you should be doing. The good worker will figure it out. Most of the good recovery workers I've worked with are just good workers generally. Make it easy for them to work flexibly. In my experience, they don't exploit it, but if you hold to rigidity in your rules, it makes it harder for them to pace themselves.

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

Standard contractual periods may not be appropriate in the recovery context. Be prepared to match contracts with a long-term sustainable program approach. Short-term contracts, which are often then extended, encourage time pressures and an unsustainable pace. They also create uncertainty and anxiety for staff unnecessarily as recovery is not a short-term phenomenon. Consider longer term contracts unless the preferred candidate would rather opt for short-term.

Value and support those on short-term contracts as you would permanent staff.

HR is often rigid and driven by theoretical considerations into risk management and are insistent that people do things because of the risk to the organization rather than the asset to a person's health.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

The HR role can be crucial. It can be the lynchpin pivoting between the individual and the organization as a whole.

Alexina Baldini - CIMA

Funders: Additional tips

Over and above the '12 principles of support' and 'Top tips for implementation' these are the key messages to funders with an interest in supporting those playing a role in recovery.

Resource and support organizations to support their personnel

Regardless of the size of an organization, supporting personnel is vital. Resource organizations, individually or collectively, to enable them to support personnel. Most commonly requested supports involved a combination of:

- Opportunities for breaks away or retreats, for replenishment and reflection
- Roving relievers (with built in time for shadowing and learning systems)
- Linking with mentors, networks, professional supervision and those who have a lived experience of a role in recovery
- Access to knowledge, info and expertise
- Stress management skill development sessions
- Load lightening support such as administration, IT, marketing etc
- Expertise to create or tailor staff and volunteer support processes

It needs to be automatic thinking, a dual approach. For any psychosocial intervention, add support for staff and community leaders who will be stressed due to the responsibility involved.

Winnifred Simon – Antares Foundation

In one community in the school they had more support of the practical type. They were supported with assistant teachers alongside every teacher. They had a retreat space and a communal space for parents. The other school did not have this. There is a huge difference in the journeys of the respective school communities with the one that received the support going from strength to strength.

Fiona Leadbeater – Volunteer, Kinglake Ranges

Include a requirement for a staff and volunteer well-being component, as good practice, in all proposal requirements (without sacrificing monies for service delivery).

Donors have a responsibility to model and enable systematic staff care practices for the sector. This is both through prioritizing psychosocial support needs in key codes or guidelines as well as resourcing organizations to do this more effectively.

Kate Minto – Mandala Foundation

Fund long-term, sustainable recovery initiatives, community building and complexity, not just tangible quick wins. Long-term funding ensures recovery is sustainable and meaningful, but also reduces the burden of multiple re-applications, lessens the stress and anxiety of role uncertainty and encourages more sustainable pace-setting for the long-term than do short-term contracts. It also recognizes the long-term nature of recovery and ameliorates the phenomenon of funding saturation in the early post-disaster days followed by scarcity from year three onwards when post-disaster needs continue and exhaustion is commonplace.

We expect the situation to continue for more than ten years. ... People expect projects which are begun to be continued. Fund long-term as the needs continue or you will create more issues in the long run than you will solve.

Tohru Shirakawa - JVC

If you are planning to do it for one year then have the ability to do it for three. As agencies, wherever possible, refuse twelve months' funding; unless you (the funder) make it three years we're not going to do it.

John Richardson – Australian Red Cross

Fund the non-tangible for meaningful, sustainable impacts. Some of the most valuable recovery support is about the psychosocial, and is process oriented not output oriented. Preoccupation with concrete outputs neglects vital social processes at the heart of community development and disaster recovery.

The rhetoric of community resilience has been increasingly used in the disaster preparedness and response field in the US, but this has not been matched by a change in policy and procedures that support methods of community engagement and capacity building.... There is a tangible output focus and the systems of accountability are head counting not social processes.

Dr Jack Saul - International Trauma Studies Program

Embrace flexibility – Recovery is not business-as-usual. It is unpredictable, ever-changing and complex. Therefore standard ways of operating do not suffice. Have a clear objective, but allow autonomy on the how. This acknowledges not only that recovery is fluid but also that those at the community level are best placed to flex and respond to meet the changing need with regards to the objective. If the end goal is a positive outcome for community, then the community-based organizations are the best motivated and the best positioned to be able to achieve this if they are given the freedom to do so.

Avoid strings. Constraints and conditions act as barriers to flexibly meeting communities' recovery needs and adds the burden of finding multiple funding sources per project. Be prepared to fund all project elements—most crucial of which are people.

A strict system of rules to access funding, assiduous in reporting and documenting how you use the money and a tight budget and various rules and restraints... It is nicer to have a situation where you give the overall vision of what you'd like to do and the funder gives money in a way which allows flexibility to apply the money as you best see fit so long as the end goal is met or contributed to in the end, without all the restrictions.

Kyoko Watanabe – Ishinomaki 2.0

Not putting expectations on your assistance. And imposed timeframes. We were written a nasty letter from a donor, wishing they hadn't helped us as we hadn't completed the community project according to their timelines. We wanted to do it in a considered way. Photo opportunities detract from the gift. We have bereaved people and then they are asked to come and smile for the camera. We are beyond grateful for what we have received but the thank you letters weighed on us... But the contributions that came without any expectation, they were a breath of fresh air. We could take it and appreciate it. Maybe a learning for everybody is the lesson of the true act of giving. If the expectation is that you will need a thank you maybe don't do it.

Fiona Leadbeater – Volunteer, Kinglake Ranges

Recognize as legitimate and valuable the role that grass roots leaders, volunteers and non-traditional recovery supporters play. Value their pride and their knowledge. Build their capacity in response to their self-identified need, but avoid changing or diluting their essence—their ways of doing things in the community.

Don't be so damned professional. If you act like a robot and sound like a robot people will think you are a robot. You have to have a warm heart, beating blood and compassion. Meet with them and get to know them and get to support them anyway you can because the grassroots don't hit red tape. The little fish don't always have to follow the same protocols. Support them as they can often do more freely what the big fish really want to be able to do but can't. Do your research and then be prepared to take a gamble. Maybe start with a small piece of the pie and build an active working relationship. We know how to stretch a dollar.

Mike Hoffman – Yellow Boots, Staten Island

Consult and think creatively to smooth processes and reduce demands, recognizing that the scarce commodity of time is best spent supporting communities and will ultimately maximize outcomes. For example, simplifying application and reporting procedures and stretching the reporting periods (for example from quarterly to bi-annually or yearly) equates to a lightened load and more time supporting communities.

Flexibility is important. Know that in recovery you need to suspend or loosen up normal business procedures. Explore how you can do things a little more flexibly or the demands put an enormous pressure on people.

Dr Rob Gordon, Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Operate from a place of humility

Funders, check your expectations at the door. It is not about you, it is about them.

Mike Hoffman – Yellow Boots, Staten Island

See ourselves as supporting sponsors, not the main actor. We are a sub-character I say.

Tohru Shirakawa - JVC

Messages for those with a role in recovery

These messages are for those playing a role in supporting communities during recovery from a disaster—shared wisdom, from your global community of those who have been before.

Look after yourself in order to look out for others. This includes pacing yourself. Community need will continue over a prolonged period, so if you are planning to support for the duration, avoid wearing yourself out in the first leg. Proactively keep your battery topped up. Replenish. Regularly participate in activities that give you energy whatever they may be; music, swimming, dancing, social activities, gardening. Get away. Regularly take time out away from the disaster-affected environment to reconnect with the world outside, regain perspective and to top up the tank.

It is a long battle. Take care of yourself. If you could, rather than be fat and short, be thin and long and pace yourself. It just goes on and on. There is a limit to how much you can do in one go. Being there continuously is a blessing. Even if you feel you cannot do anything, being there is a wonderful thing.

Dr Tomoko Osawa – Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress, Kobe

Dedicate as much time to your own recovery as you do to others’.

Anon – Kinglake Ranges

Balance reasonable expectations and optimism - Have realistic expectations and focus on the possible. Keep hope and focus on the good.

There is a story about Mother Teresa that I think illustrates it nicely. ... Given the overwhelming need she faced, they asked her how she bore the sense of responsibility. She said she only felt the responsibility to do what she could with that person in that moment. “I just want to help where I can.” The mentality of “I realize I can only help to the extent that I can” is so different to people who think they can help until they drop. The latter is a noble strategy, but it is a losing strategy.

Dr James Guy – Headington Institute

For some reason we’ve experienced that it is human nature always to go to the negative – what we weren’t able to assist with rather than what we did do. Journal - write down the positive stuff and what you’ve accomplished. Identify successes and accomplishments.

Lisa Orloff – World Cares Center

For me, this means finding the seeds of resilience within the hearts and minds of the affected people, and to carry on my own work with the knowledge of their resilience to support me. I think that the first step in providing support is to believe that people will someday be able to start their lives again. In this sense, I think that having a totally unfounded sense of optimism is a big asset. Humans have used this to continue to survive since the beginning of time.

Kyoko Nakatani - Psychologist, Kobe

Connect – Be courageous and let others support you. Create a network for yourself of positive and supportive people. Know that you are not alone. What you may be feeling and experiencing is a human reaction to a challenging load. Connect and you will find others are feeling the same way and others with previous lived experience who can support you. You are part of a global community of people working in recovery, often feeling isolated, but who face similar challenges and have similar reactions.

If I were doing it again I would gather all my friends for a potluck meal and say this is what I'm embarking on and what I need from you in the next two years... I would get my ducks in the water. If I had relied on them more I would have done better and not experience such depletion at the end of a two or three year journey through disaster.

Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross

Don't stay alone. Stay connected. There can be the tendency to mentally isolate yourself and burden yourself with, "I have to do this." Collect your friends and understand your obstacles.

Tineke van Pietersom – Antares Foundation

The elders in my community, they are the old heads with maturity and experience – calm experience. They look after me and support me but aren't afraid to have a word to me if I step out of line. I listen and respect them. And I encourage others to do this as well.

Brad Quilliam – Kinglake Ranges Business Network

Build a bridge – The gulf in understanding between those working locally in recovery and distantly located management, funders or recovery authorities is a stressor, for those working towards recovery from within the community and often also for those assisting from the outside.

It helps to acknowledge that this is more likely to occur than not and proactively consider strategies to address this likelihood.

Those who have come after the fact are damned if they do, damned if they don't. We think, "Don't pretend you know and understand" and at the same time, "Show some compassion!" But we need them. They will help with volunteer fatigue, but we have to work out how to let others help. ... We all grapple with accepting help from outside. We'll close rank. We'll know best. We want to protect our communities from further damage.

Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross

...how much of an outsider you feel. And it is never used in a positive way. It is only ever used against you as a weapon. I cannot speak for everyone who is an outsider, but you are so aware that you don't get it, that you don't understand. You are so aware that you are not part of the game, you are so aware of it all the time. And for me that has resulted in me not doing things I probably should have done -being gun shy a lot of the time.... You are so aware that your opinion will never have the same level of importance, and you are so aware that you have to be constantly apologetic and constantly cautious and... Not everyone feels like that though I think.

Tineke van Pietersom – Antares Foundation

Sometimes egos, agendas or lack of willingness to gain an appreciation of local realities may make the gulf too difficult to span, and scarce and precious energy might be better placed elsewhere. However, for every person on the other side of the divide who is not willing, there is likely to be one who is genuine and whose contributions or efforts are too readily discounted.

Using common values or a shared noble purpose as a guide, consider selectively building bridges. If the approach and effort is sincerely motivated and relates to a genuine need, rather than blocking it at the first attempt, consider finding a way to work together to build understanding and shape the approach to something useful. In our frustration with outsiders who do not understand and show no interest in doing so, we may underestimate our own role in erecting roadblocks to useful alliances and support.¹⁶

Early on we realized that to support and engage our people a grass roots communication strategy would be the most successful as opposed to our traditional method of Wellington-based and led communications. This created some upset. Understanding the intrinsic need was fundamental to all parties buying into the change. But it was the right thing to do. A couple of years down the track though there is the realization that any approach comes with pros and cons. At times there are complaints about the lack of understanding of those outside of Christchurch, they just don't get it. But we have to consider the part we have played in this too.

Kaye Taiaroa, IRD, Christchurch

Where a bridge might be built, be open in discussion, guide gently, use the power of stories and concrete examples, capitalize on sensory impact, encourage time spent on the ground amongst the reality. As a radical example, shifting high level meetings from head offices to the damaged or temporary home of one of the team changes the lens through which issues and accomplishments are viewed.

When we are high on stress and low on tolerance, as is usually the case in long-term recovery, building these bridges takes deliberate effort, patience and kindness. But never underestimate the power of the collective. It can do wonders to have people alongside you, supporting you, rather than hollering at each other across the chasm!

And these people came from outside and what they wanted to do, I thought it was ridiculous! But they did it, and later I realized it was great. Sometimes the perspective of someone who is a little bit removed, when you are stuck in it, can be helpful. ... I would say, allow for the fact that people can see things you cannot and allow space for things to emerge.

Anne Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges

Collaborate. Avoid re-inventing the wheel, find others with similar interests and consider novel partnerships.

Let the leaders lead and the workers work. Combine skills, intelligence and resources. It makes more sense to work together. It is stupid to be stubborn. Leave your ego at the door. Humble yourself to hear a person out if they have knowledge. There might be ten things you may disagree with but two or three useful things that you can adapt. With ants, if you have two different colonies and you put them together they will bind together for the greater good. There are no egos. They can lift a hundred times their body weight and work in perfect unison. If ants had the brains we have they'd be ruling the world.

Mike Hoffman – Yellow Boots, Staten Island

¹⁶ The quote from Kaye Taiaroa (right) originated from a meeting held on 3 April, 2014, prior to this research.

Perform an appraisal of your own ‘fitness’ and have strategies in place for stress. Know your signs of stress and your stress triggers—in advance. Have strategies—your personal stress-busters. These may be different for everyone but some form of physical exercise within your strategies was a common suggestion. Humor and laughter, for many, was a very important strategy. Find ways to express tension, frustration and emotion.

Have a good understanding as to what organizational supports are available to you. Ask questions, advocate, and know the limitations so that you can plan and compensate for any shortfalls.

It’s very clear that none of us are very good at self-care. I haven’t found anyone good at self-care, ever! There are all the reasons why. We are care-takers, we are busy, we are doing this, we are doing that... But coming up with a list of short things you can do. Okay so you can’t go to a yoga session but can you pause on your way from your office to the car and notice the color of the sky? Can you let other people take care of you? (Something a lot of care-takers have trouble with. And a lot of our friends and family want to take care of us but we create this reputation that we do it all). So there have to be simple things that people can build into their days that are not this complicated, “I have to go to the gym every night, I have to learn how to meditate.” One of the co-facilitators decided she had to learn how to meditate and so had to read every book on the subject and made it this major project and she never did, rather than trying just to be still for a minute! Create a short list of things that you can commit to.

Diane Ryan – American Red Cross¹⁷

Clarify the organizational support systems that are in place, such as briefing, debriefing, leave, time in lieu, R&R... Ask questions of your organization to support your understanding of what is there and any limitations. Consider also what your own responsibilities for self-care are in this context.

Kate Minto – Mandala Foundation

Operate with kindness – both towards yourself and your team. Your team is one of your most powerful resources of support. However, as tiredness increases and tolerance decreases, chronic stress encourages a narrowed focus on our challenges, as a survival mechanism, at the expense of the needs of others. This puts teams under strain and creates an environment in which misunderstandings and conflict can thrive. Rather than being a source of support, the team can then become a source of stress. As team members, a powerful strategy is to make a deliberate effort to operate from a position of kindness. Considering the other’s perspective, defaulting to understanding and kindness when not in agreement, small gestures, tokens of support, words of encouragement. These are not natural responses when overwhelmed, but if team members can use kindness as a guiding philosophy and strategy, stress diminishes and collegial support grows.

Find the fun in your role

The best thing to be able to keep going is to enjoy it yourself, not just I am helping you but also something you can enjoy. Get something out of it. Japanese society views playing around and enjoying yourself as a bad thing. They emphasize diligence and being a good citizen. But if I were doing this again I would be less worried about what people think for bringing the fun factor in. Plug the enjoyment factor.

Kyoko Watanabe – Ishinomaki 2.0

¹⁷ The evidence-based ‘Five Ways to Well-being’ are a helpful guide – more details can be found in Appendix E
A Hummingly self-care template is included in the Appendices along with a link to a useful tool to create a wellbeing plan.

Remember the other roles and goals in your life – Know that opting out of your recovery role is a valid option.

At the end of the day, it mightn't feel like it, but someone else can do your job. But no one else can be your kids' Mom or Dad. No one else can be you in your real life. If the two are conflicting, you can say no. Halfway through you have to know you can back out.

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

I lost a good chunk of happiness. It is not the price we should pay for caring for others. Don't sacrifice yourself.

Lisa Orloff – World Cares Center

Appendix A: Locations visited



1. Kinglake Ranges, Victoria. 2. Kobe, 3. A clock stopped at the time of the Kobe earthquake 5.46am Jan 17, 1995,
4. Aboriginal artwork in Melbourne, 5. Spontaneous memorial in Ishinomaki, 6. Tsunami affected Ishinomaki,
7. A clock halted by tsunami inundation at a primary school on Oshika Peninsular,
8. Houses damaged by Hurricane Sandy, 9. A treasured acknowledgment of volunteer work at Ground Zero

Country	Locale	Rationale / relevant disaster
Australia	Melbourne, Victoria	Concentration of people and organizations who have worked in roles relevant to varying recovery contexts within Australia and expertise in trauma and humanitarian staff support.
Australia	Kinglake Ranges, Victoria	Black Saturday Bushfire - February 7, 2009
Japan	Tokyo	Concentration of people and organizations who have worked in roles relevant to varying recovery contexts within Japan
Japan	Kobe	The Great Hanshin or Kobe earthquake. January 17, 1995
Japan	Sendai and Ishinomaki	Great East Japan (also known as the Tohoku) earthquake and tsunami, March 11, 2011
Denmark	Copenhagen	Expertise in psychosocial recovery
The Netherlands	Amsterdam	Expertise in humanitarian staff support
The United Kingdom	Britain	Experience in varying disaster recovery contexts in the U.K. but also in Haiti and the Philippines
The United States	Pasadena, California	Experience in varying disaster recovery contexts Expertise in humanitarian staff support
The United States	Washington DC	Concentration of people and organizations who have worked in roles relevant to varying recovery contexts within the U.S.
The United States	New York City, Staten Island and Long Island	9-11 terrorist attack, September 11, 2001 Superstorm Sandy, October 2012

Appendix B: Interviewees

Name	Role	Organization
Australia - Melbourne, Kinglake Ranges		
Anne Leadbeater	Independent contractor	Leadbeater Consulting Kinglake Ranges
Kate Brady	National Recovery Coordinator	Australian Red Cross
Greg Ireton	Principal Advisor	Department of Human Services, Victoria
Alexina Baldini	President	Crisis Intervention and Management Australia (CIMA)
Kate Minto	Director of Programs and Psychological Services	Mandala Foundation
Brad Quilliam	(Former) President (Former) Charter	Kinglake Ranges Business Network Rotary Club of Kinglake Ranges
Matt Falla, Sylvia Thomas Helen Goodman	Staff team	Community On-Ground Assistance (COGA)
Neesha Sinclair, Jacquie Garlick Lisa Roberts	Kinglake Ranges	Anonymous
Dr Rob Gordon	Clinical psychologist	Independent consulting psychologist in emergency recovery
Jemima Richards Kate Riddell	Co-founders	Firefoxes
Jodie Bowker	(Former) Bushfire Response Coordinator	(Formerly) EACH
Fiona Leadbeater	Volunteer	Kinglake Ranges
John Richardson	National Coordinator - Emergency Preparedness	Australian Red Cross
Japan - Tokyo, Kobe, Sendai, Ishinomaki		
Mie Kashiwade	Head of Tohoku Emergency Response Unit	PLAN Japan
Ryo Goto	Program Officer of Tohoku Emergency Response Unit	
Dr Toshiharu Makishima	Head, International Medical Relief Department	Japanese Red Cross Medical Center
Naoki Kondo Yasuyuki Sawada Kanakano Masuno	Associate Professor, School of Public Health Professor, Economics Researcher, Health Policy and Planning	University of Tokyo
Tohru Shirakawa	Coordinator for Disaster Responses	Japanese International Volunteer Center (JVC)
Yosuke Takada	Researcher	Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institute (DRI)
Dr Tomoko Osawa	Clinical Psychologist	Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress
Dr Noriko Murakami	Head, Psychotherapeutic Internal Medicine Department	Kobe Red Cross Hospital

Kyoko Nakatani ¹⁸	Psychologist	
Dr John Morris	Professor	Miyagi Gakuin University
Machiko Kamiyama	Clinical Psychologist	Tamagata University / Care Miyagi
Nobuko Kamata and Ayami Sugai	Team members	Anon - organization working with tsunami-affected residents
Dr Tomoaki Adachi	Professor of Developmental and Clinical Studies	Miyagi Gakuin Women's University
Prof Mikio Hirano	Associate Professor	Tohoku Bunka Gakuen University
Kobayashi Tomoaki		Japan IsraAID Support Program
Kensho Tambara	Board Director	Voices of Tohoku Project (JISP)
Dr Kazuki Nishiura	Dept of Developmental and Clinical Studies	Miyagi Gakuin Women's University
Keiko Fukumoto	Healing Japan Project Director	Japan IsraAID Support Program
Takao Yamamoto		Peaceboat
Teiichiro Yotsukura And colleague (anonymous)		Organization working with tsunami-affected villages in Japan (name removed by request)
Yasushi Maruoka	Professor	Ishinomaki Senshu University
Mayumi Nishimura		Co-Hack
Shigemi Kato	Principal	Ohara Elementary School
Takahiro Ito	Regional Academic-Industrial Alliance Coordinator	Fukkou University Alliance
Masahito Sekihara		Reconstruction Supporters
Iwao Kaneda Akiko Sasaki	Director Clinical Development Psychologist	Ishinomaki Japanese Red Cross Hospital
Kyoko Watanabe	Director	Ishinomaki 2.0

Europe and the UK – Denmark, the Netherlands, England

Johara Boukaa ¹⁹	Staff Care Associate	World Vision
Louise Steen Kryger	Technical Advisor	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Reference Center for Psychosocial Support
Tineke van Pietersom Winnifred Simon	Directors	Antares
Ted Tuthill Sarah Davidson Katie Barnett	Recovery Operations Manager, Head of Psychosocial Support HR Advisor International	British Red Cross

¹⁸ Via email communication

¹⁹ Communication via video call

The United States – Pasadena CA, Washington DC, New York City, Staten Island, Long Island

Jill Hofmann	International Services Chair	American Red Cross
Dr James Guy	President	
Dr Rick Williamson	Clinical Training Director and Consulting Psychologist	Headington Institute
Sandra Shields	Disaster Mental Health Co-Lead, California – Volunteer Advisor	American Red Cross
Mary Chasin	Manager, Regional Recovery Program	American Red Cross
Valerie Cole	Manager, Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health	
Christie Wrightson	Senior Associate, Disaster Mental Health	American Red Cross
Jacqueline Yannacci	Director, Community Resilience	
Dr Emi Kiyota	President	Ibashi
Mike Hoffman	Co-founder and Co-Chair of Rebuild	Yellow Boots
Erica Lowry	Senior Director Long-Term Recovery for Sandy	American Red Cross
Diane Ryan	Lead Specialist Disaster Mental Health Services, Greater New York	American Red Cross
Nanette McLain	Director of Case Management Services - Sandy Long-Term Recovery	American Red Cross
Sara McMullianis	Mental health coordinator and trainer	New York University
Kerry Symons	Director, Disaster Distress Response Program	Visiting Nurse Service of New York
Thomas McDonough	Director Rebuilding and Client Services	Siller Foundation
Joe Samalin	Outreach Manager	Disaster Distress Hotline
Peter Miller	Co-founder and board member	World Trade Center Survivors Network
Lisa Orloff	Executive Director	World Cares Center
Emily Gonzalez	Disaster Case Manager	FEGS Health and Human Services, Long Island
Isabel Munoz	Residential Rebuilding Coordinator	FEGS Health and Human Services, Long Island
Scott Kemins	Building Commissioner	City of Long Beach
Barbara Marion Horn	September 11 and Sandy Community Advocate	
Dr Jack Saul	Director	International Trauma Studies Program

Appendix C: Interview themes and questions

1. What makes working in recovery challenging?
2. Why support the supporters? (Exploration of risks/costs, benefits and reasons for supporting the supporters)
3. Are there ways that organizations or processes usually operate (when there is no disaster) that need to change or be more flexible during recovery?
4. What support has or would be helpful?
5. What are the barriers to supporting those with a role in recovery? (What gets in the way of doing it?)
6. Given your experience, what message would you give to others about to play a role in disaster recovery:
 - I. What message would you give someone who is about to work or volunteer to support communities in long-term recovery?
 - II. What message would you give to team leaders or middle management about how they might support those with a role in recovery
 - III. What message would you give to senior management or governance about looking after those working in recovery?
 - IV. What message would you give to funders or recovery authorities about how they might support or lighten the load for those supporting communities through recovery?

Appendix D: A note on limitations

This fellowship served as an exploratory exercise through which more could be learned about the realities of working in disaster recovery and possible strategies for supporting the supporters. This report should only be considered as a first pass at exploring the terrain and not a definitive map.

A second caveat is that this fellowship crossed different cultural terrains. In Japan, I was particularly conscious of cultural nuances. Firstly, there is the language divide—even with a great interpreter a little something is lost. Secondly, I expected cultural differences relating to discussing organizational challenges, personal impacts or openness to admitting difficulty. And thirdly, I was conscious that each disaster has unique sensitivities understood only by those who live it. Cultural variations and local disaster nuances were indeed evident, but I was surprised and grateful for the openness and trust shown, and by the commonality of experience highlighted. For example, the challenge of grappling with the overwhelming nature of working in recovery whilst feeling reluctant to divulge their struggles for fear of admitting weakness was openly discussed, albeit with different cultural drivers, across cultures. It is hoped that this report will be considered and adapted according to the cultural lens through which it is viewed, rather than as a one-size fits all reflection and prescription.

The third caveat is that I am acutely aware that people do not exist in isolation, divorced from their social context. Family, friends, community, teams, and organizations feature heavily throughout - as part of the stressors which add to the challenge of a role in recovery, as being impacted if the load becomes too heavy, and as vital components of the means of providing support. I have attempted to consider the individual within their social landscape. However, if it makes better sense or is more useful, please consider swapping out references to 'the individual' for a team, a family, an organization.... For example, the analogy of a person carrying a heavy load applies equally to a team.

Appendix E: Useful links and resources

All Right? Campaign. <http://allright.org.nz>

The All Right? Campaign is a collaborative initiative aiming to promote well-being in post-earthquake Canterbury, with messaging, tools and research to support the general population. New Zealand Red Cross is one of the collaborative partners and, although not designed for this purpose, has found the campaign resources instrumental in attempts to raise awareness and support well-being within our Red Cross people in Canterbury.

Antares Foundation. (2012). *Managing Stress in Humanitarian Workers: Guidelines for good practice* (3rd Ed). Amsterdam. www.antaresfoundation.org

A valuable good-practice guide for supporting humanitarian workers across all phases of the deployment cycle.

Australian Center for Posttraumatic Mental Health. (2011). *Development of guidelines on peer support using the Delphi methodology.* www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au

Guidance to inform peer support programs.

Australian Red Cross. (2010). *Communicating in Recovery.* Carlton, Vic: Australian Red Cross.

Valuable guidance for communicating with varying audiences post-disaster. Australian Red Cross also runs training based upon the materials.

Center for Creative Leadership. (2007). *Empathy in the workplace: A tool for effective leadership.* Greensboro, NC: Gentry W. A., Weber, T. J., Sadri, G. www.ccl.org/leadership/pdf/research

A white paper linking empathic leadership to organizational performance, with suggestions for implementation.

Hartsough, D. M., & Myers, D. G. (1985). *Disaster work and mental health: Prevention and control of stress among workers.* Washington DC: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. A comprehensive guide relating to workers responding in the earlier post-disaster context.

Headington Institute website. www.headington-institute.org

Information and resources relating to support of humanitarian workers.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2009). *Managing Stress in the Field* (4th Ed.) Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. <http://www.InternationalFederationofRedCrossandRedCrescentSocieties.org/en/what-we-do/health/publications/>

A resource related to managing stress for humanitarian workers in the field.

Mandala Foundation website. www.mandalafoundation.org.au

Information and resources relating to support of humanitarian workers.

McNaughton, E. (2013). *Leadership, wisdom and the post-disaster recovery process.* <http://elizabethmcnaughton.com/2013/03/20/leadership-wisdom-and-the-post-disaster-recovery-process/> Elizabeth McNaughton's Winston Churchill Fellowship report on disaster recovery leadership includes insights on workforce resilience, and can be accessed from Elizabeth's blog.

New Economics Foundation. (2008). Five ways to well-being. <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/five-ways-to-well-being-the-evidence>

Five evidence-based, accessible strategies to support well-being useful for individuals and for workplaces.

New Economics Foundation. (2014). Well-being at work: A review of the literature. www.nef-consulting.co.uk/well-being-at-work/

A useful review of the key drivers of well-being in the workplace—in a non-disaster context.

Nilakant, K., Walker, B., Rochford, K., van Heugten, K. (2014). Leading in a post-disaster setting: Guidance for human resource practitioners. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, 38, 1-13.

Useful guidance for HR personnel supporting teams post-disaster.

Orloff, L. (2011). *Managing Spontaneous Community Volunteers in Disasters: A field manual*. New York: CRC Press.

A guide to managing and supporting spontaneous community volunteers after a disaster, informed by personal experience.

Resilient Organisations. www.resorgs.org.nz

A public research initiative based in New Zealand, featuring research and insights into what makes organizations resilient, along with resources and tools.

Snider, L. (2013). *Caring for volunteers: A psychosocial support toolkit*. Copenhagen: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Reference Center for Psychosocial Support.

A practical and invaluable resource, whilst aimed at caring for volunteers during disaster response, has transferable guidance and tools, which can be applied to long-term recovery.

van Heugten, K. (2014). *Human Service Organizations in the Disaster Context*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

In the Canterbury post-earthquake environment Dr Kate van Heugten paints a vivid picture of the political complexity and resultant challenges faced by human service workers in their roles.

van Heugten, K. (2011). *Social Work Under Pressure: How to overcome stress, fatigue and burnout in the workplace*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Discussion of workplace stress theories and useful strategies for support (and self-supporting) social workers in their high pressure and demanding roles in a non-disaster environment.

van Heugten, K. (2013). Supporting human service workers following the Canterbury earthquakes. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 25, 35-44.

Appendix F: The bricks – The nature of recovery

Unpredictability: Because recovery is a constantly changing process, it is untidy and unpredictable. It is difficult to adapt and to plan and the usual rules and processes often do not fit. Despite hard work to create solutions and responses to community needs, what works today probably won't work tomorrow.²⁰ There is more unknown in recovery than known. The end goal and how to get there are so unclear. Even with heartfelt commitment to support those in recovering communities, there is so much uncertainty as to how to go about it. Add to this the fact that the vast majority of people (and organizations) with a role to play in recovery have not experienced or worked in disaster recovery before. More than one person likened the experience of learning about disaster recovery, working out what to do and creating structures and processes as you are actually doing it, to the notion of having to build a plane while you are flying it. Dr Rob Gordon talks about uncertainty and novelty being two of the most powerful sources of stress—in recovery you have bucket loads of both.

We don't know how things are going to play out. We don't even know what the end game is. We don't know how to define what recovery is or know when it has occurred. John Richardson - Australian Red Cross At the time of the disaster it was all new and the first time to experience it. Well it has been three years and everything that has occurred since has been a continuation of first time experiences. Takahiro Ito - Fukkou University Alliance

Complexity: It is complex because preexisting community inequities and challenges mingle with disaster impacts and because communities are heterogeneous. One affected community is different to another, and each community itself consists of diverse groups of people with differing needs, strengths and visions.

The communities are culturally diverse. They are all very different communities. The villages, which are primarily made up of fishermen are different to villages composed of farmers. Dr Toshiharu Makishima, Japanese Red Cross Medical Center

²⁰ Given the frequency with which this challenge was described by interviewees inspired me to attempt to capture the reality in a blog reflection likening working in recovery to the challenges of first-time parenthood – featured in Appendix I

The load: By far the most commonly mentioned challenge is how immense the load is—the sheer overwhelming nature of the task at hand. The reality of working in a community service role is demanding at the best of times, without throwing a disaster in the mix. Social sector and community-based organizations operate on the smell of an oily rag and their workers (be they staff, volunteers or members) are already stretched. In disaster recovery, every dimension of community and personal life is altered and a whole raft of additional demands are added. Whether in a role which pre-dated the disaster or in a recovery specific role, unrealistic case/workloads, deadlines, demand far outstripping the people available to assist, competing priorities, the weight of public expectation, and the burden of responsibility are, in the words of Fiona Leadbeater, “a huge weight on so few shoulders.” The possibility of delegation disappears too when everyone involved is in the same position. The interesting aspect of carrying a load of bricks is that whilst you are carrying a load, any one brick, which you could usually sort out, becomes difficult to handle the way you would like to, without risking an avalanche of the other competing priorities. For those used to performing at a high level or multi-tasking with ease, doing the ‘brick-dance’ is a stressor in itself.

They were so tired and so sick of flying blind. This was a man who was usually very in control of what he did and probably very good at what he did and then had been thrust into this role as xxx (position removed for anonymity) and had never done it before and he was living in the community as well.... There were all these new issues becoming apparent in the community that needed to be dealt with. ... And he said, “I was just so tired, I was so overwhelmed and all I could see was that it was just getting bigger and I just couldn’t figure out how to slow it down...” It must have terrifying for him. Kate Brady - Australian Red Cross

They are doing a completely different thing on top of all the complex stuff they used to do. People say I am doing twice as much as I used to do, and I was already doing too much before. Anon - New York

Relentlessness: Another prevailing feature of recovery work, as described by those working in it, is the relentlessness.

The image that comes to mind is the relentlessness and drudgery of it. Some are so tired. They eventually forget how to be empathic and effective. For years they are not bright and sparky people. The feeling is that there is no end in this. Kate Brady - Australian Red Cross

Professors one year on as a matter of pride wouldn’t admit they had problems. In the third year, they finally came and asked for support. Three years on they are tired. Everyone is beginning to feel they are at the end of their tether. Anon - Japan

Inability to meet the need: One of the most confronting stressors of a role in recovery is the inability to meet the need encountered and the lack of control over outcomes for residents.

With recovery, there are so many problems that cannot be solved. All we can do is be there, support them and be their cheerleaders and coach. We cannot be there twenty-four seven. And many just want their life returned, but no matter what you do you cannot do this for them. Dr Tomoko Osawa - Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress, Kobe.

People have high expectations of you to fix their problems and link them to funding but you don't have direct access or control over the solutions. Emily Gonzalez -FEGS, Long Island

Thankless and unrecognized nature: Most people working in recovery do not do it for the thanks, however without positive feedback in some form, their involvement is personally depleting. For many, the role can be thankless and their contribution under-valued. There are many people who have a vital role to play in supporting communities but their input is not recognized, despite the fact that the responsibilities and complexities of their role have multiplied, and they are exposed to others' accounts of distress and anger. Likewise those from outside the community who have a genuine desire to be responsive and supportive are often met with distrust and hostility for their efforts, due to negative encounters locals have experienced with other 'outsiders'. In stark contrast to the accolades, which are often associated with the emergency response phase, heart-felt efforts to support and assist the community during the recovery phase may be met with antagonism, frustration, or go unnoticed. Unless they've had the opportunity to develop an understanding of the typical processes involved in community recovery, having their efforts met with ill-feeling is contrary to what may be expected. And many did not actively sign up for a role in recovery—finding their pre-existing role morphing to include new recovery facets and responsibilities. Further, despite best efforts and acutely aware of public scrutiny, the reality is that whatever decisions are made, they are likely to upset half the community.

There are a lot of people supporting in lots of different ways. They are not in obvious recovery roles and so are not recognized. It is like a pebble in a pond. We focus on one ring but other rings and people in those roles are affected by the ripples too. Kate Riddell – Firefoxes

You are talking to a resident about one thing and after a while you realize you are not talking about that at all, but what it meant and felt like, their anger and frustration, culture, community and identity. You suddenly think, "whoa, I thought I was helping. What happened here?" You are helping people and get anger and frustration in return. Anon – New York, U.S.

People are often unprepared for the level of anger they experience from the community. They are expecting gratitude and are horrified. "Hang on a minute, why do people hate me?" Greg Ireton – Advisor, Victorian Government

We are not expecting anything special from them in terms of thanks, but we don't know how to deal with their anger and their feelings. Nobuko Kamata – Japan Community work is not considered to be important. It is not taken seriously. The skills involved need to be taken seriously and recognized as a skill, career and specialist area. Sylvia Thomas - COGA, Kinglake

Exposure to others' stories and distress:

Being exposed to people's stories and emotions can take a particular toll. It is emotionally exhausting work and opens people to the risk of suffering vicarious trauma—remembering that those who perform this role range from those serving drinks at the local pub, the hair dresser, sports coach, teacher, doctor or council receptionist, insurance assessor to case managers and counselors.

I avoid documentaries about the fires. I knew every person and their story in one documentary which covered a wide range geographically. I kept thinking, I shouldn't know the details of what's happened to these people that's not being talked about. Jodie Bowker – formerly of EACH, Victoria

They had to control their own stress plus the stress of people they are supporting, residents with trauma, talking and starting to cry, every day. Residents want to talk and want someone who will listen to them and stay by their side and nod and say, "Yes". Very tiring. Exhausting. Tohru Shirakawa – JVC

The feeling of being an outsider: Not everyone who works in recovery is from the local area. A common 'brick' is the feeling of being an outsider. This creates an obstacle to overcome in their role and can color interactions with suspicion and scrutiny.

Gaining acceptance is so difficult. "What would you know? You weren't here." Needing to be mindful and gaining trust. If you are not known, if you weren't there, you will always be treated with suspicion. You only get one shot and you are so conscious of it. There is a lot of pressure on you for that initial engagement. The initial interaction is so crucial. I have seen it go wrong. The pressure of being seen as an outsider and not being accepted is hard. John Richardson - Australian Red Cross

The weight of expectations: A role in recovery, in whatever form, comes with expectations (often unrealistic) from all directions.

As a volunteer, pressed into it, you're on a committee and charged with deciding it for everyone but all eyes are on us... Fiona Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges

I had a real fear of failure. I didn't want to fail my community and my family. Brad Quilliams – Kinglake Ranges Business Network

Personal links to the community:

This becomes much more personally challenging when you are part of the community yourself or have developed connections with affected residents.

I was told horror stories from xxx (organization removed) about how people in New Orleans in my role just picked up and walked away from their jobs. I could see with the stress involved how that could happen. But I have too much invested in Long Beach. It is more than just a job. It is my town. I grew up here, my kids are growing up here. I cannot run from my job because there is more to it than that. Scott Kemins - Building Commissioner, Long Island

The blur between supporting a community and being part of a community:

Supporting people within your own community flows over into effects on community life outside your role.

When I see someone in the street I am remembering how I met them. It colors the whole social interaction as I recall and identify with their journey. Jodie Bowker – formerly of EACH, Victoria

You can be ostracized if clients are in your own community. Anger against the department automatically ostracizes people. They have grown up in that community. They are now cut off. They get stuck between pressures from their department and having their community supports ripped away from them. Greg Ireton – Advisor, Victorian Government

You know everybody so it becomes more personal and when it becomes more personal it becomes more stressful. And I will see them in the supermarket or at a school function. At school I will get a building permit question or messages on my personal Facebook from architects... Scott Kemins - Building Commissioner

Juggling your own recovery:

For those working in recovery who are local and are affected by the disaster themselves, a whole other layer of bricks are added to the bundle. Juggling support of others, the demands of life as usual and managing your own rebuild, repair, housing needs or emotional recovery from disaster featured amongst the most commonly described challenge, and one that is not currently provisioned for in existing guides concerning stress management in workers.

There was the supporting my parents, dealing with the red tape, getting into temporary housing, In addition to dealing with the problem at hand there were emerging issues stacked on top. I don't think this has really stopped and all the things you've neglected in the meantime stack up and you have to play catch up, all the things I let slide, tax returns, business and family. From the time of the fires I had a job to sort my own house but also my parents. Also you volunteer in a community sense but also in a friend sense with needing to have your radar out for those who need a hand. And you worry about your kids who have blocks of learning gaps in school traceable back to the fires. There is buckling fear for your kids and their well-being and frustration of not knowing what to do. You are building a house, which is on the list of one of the most stressful things you can do in life and you are not doing it by choice because all you want is what you had back and the people you had around you. Plus you've had your brain taken out, sloshed around and put back in – and now build a house. You are thinking about your immediate concerns and then you run into someone who has lost a child and you need to have a supportive exchange that's meaningful. And you are pressed onto a committee and charged with deciding things for everyone. All eyes on us and I do not even have the capacity to make my own paint color decisions! It all comes back to the combined, when you are volunteering, working in an emergency situation and rebuilding your life and protecting and supporting people around you all at the same time and you are doing it when you've got chinks in your armor... It is a big gig, and I don't know anyone who did it easily. Fiona Leadbeater – Volunteer, Kinglake Ranges

All encompassing: Between the flow-on effect of client interactions into home life, and life outside the role also being impacted by the disaster, disaster recovery can be all encompassing. There is no escaping the stressors and themes faced in your role when they permeate all aspects of life.

It's not being able to get away from it. Where's the respite? ... It's living it, breathing it, and being surrounded by it and not even realizing the impact it is having on you until you get away and have a picnic where you are not surrounded by black trees... Alexina Baldini – CIMA

One teacher said, the area I lived in every house disappeared and only the rice field remained but my house on the hillside was okay. And to go to school on my bicycle through this and to have to go back through dark fields was... It was nice when we began to hear the frogs come back and sing. Machiko Kamiyama – Yamagata University/ Care Miyagi

It could have been me: There may also be something different about a supporter-supportee role in disaster recovery that makes the boundary more readily permeable. Rightly or wrongly in your typical health or social service role in non-disaster times, it is easier to feel that the client is in different circumstances to yourself. However, the identification with people you are supporting is stronger after a disaster as there is the sense that 'it could have been me'.

...these are ordinary, everyday people who find themselves in circumstances where it's traumatic. By identifying with people, professional boundaries blur. It is a unique stressor. John Richardson - Australian Red Cross

The slings and arrows of life: And because recovery is an on-going process over a number of years, normal life stressors continue to contribute to the mix, the impacts of which can be exacerbated by reduced carrying capacity. The idea that life stress can be neatly left at the door when you come to work in recovery is a fallacy.

You cannot separate out normal stressors from those of recovery. The slings and arrows of normal life have a different impact when they come after, when the whole community has been through trauma. Anne Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges

It is the combination of personal and work factors – not just seeing, hearing and touching the disaster around you. The family circumstances. If your mother is not well, kids are sick, children's school... practical issues at home... It is the combination of the two that counts... Absolutely, personal and work stressors cannot be separated. Johara Boukaa – World Vision

Waning support: Another reality appears to be that whilst demands do not seem to relent, available support wanes with time, with exhaustion tracking upward. Residents have expectations raised by the glut of initial support, which once withdrawn, leaves in its wake depleted and tired community personnel with an arduous, complex job to complete in the face of public scrutiny and expectation.

It gets more and more difficult each year, and financially more difficult as time goes on. People forget. Geographical distance is closely related to psychological distance. The same happens with time. Dr Toshiharu Makishima - Japanese Red Cross Medical Center

Many people came originally, now they feel forgotten. The media have moved on. It is a big burden to carry responsibility themselves now without support. Tohru Shirakawa - JVC

Once the majority of the work is done, agencies stepped out. But in their wake they left community in a diminished-service environment. There are raised expectations in the community. Then when you withdraw services there is greater pressure on the local organizations that are left. Anon - Kinglake Ranges

Isolation: Along with the reduced attention, can come a sense of social isolation, left to cope with a role, which is novel and uncharted with little understanding of the faced realities.

There are increasing feelings of isolation amongst the workers. If you don't have support you have no one to share problems with and get rid of stress. You feel alone. The isolation aspect is the worst thing and if you end up isolated there is no valve to let it out so you end up amplifying your own troubles. You lose objectivity and cannot reason in a rational way and this will affect your activities. Anon - Japan

I often work alone and it is isolating. I have met others but they work in temporary accommodation so are in a different context with different challenges. They already have a strong support network but I am on my own as a support network didn't exist for my role, so I don't have anyone to share my challenges with. Teichiro Yotsukura - Japan

Diminished resources: Loss or disruption to resources as a result of the disaster makes a difficult role more difficult: loss of staff, organizational members, volunteers, offices, records, meeting or gathering facilities, IT capabilities... results in a challenging operating environment. The working environment becomes less conducive to efficiency, less pleasant, and compounds workload and frustration.

Half their life is in their cars so it becomes a massive logistical feat. Kate Brady - Australian Red Cross

Community organizations face huge disruption. They lose members, records, facilities... They are a glue in our communities and if their capacity is diminished then there is an impact on people's recovery. Anne Leadbeater - Kinglake Ranges

Appendix G: The bricks – at the individual level

Empathic nature: As Peter Miller (World Trade Center Survivors' Network) points out: one of the necessary traits which makes people good at what they do and attracts them to work in the human service field is empathy and passion for helping others. The flipside of this trait is that it makes people vulnerable to the emotional risks of working in disaster recovery. These are the people you want supporting others, but they are also the people who need careful protection and support.

At work we had mandatory counseling and I look up from telling my story and she was crying. It was my first encounter of the impacts of vicarious trauma. Naturally people with empathy tend towards social service endeavors. It is so important, but empathy also allows people to damage themselves that way by listening. Peter Miller – World Trade Center Survivors Network

Giving their all: Self-sacrificing is another trait commonly used to people working in this field. The empathy is crucial, the self-sacrificing tendency has the potential to be a real downfall. Passionate people who give their all is another descriptor commonly described by participants as being a contributor to both their success and their difficulties staying afloat. These are caring people who tend towards placing the needs of others before their own. The message that they need to care for themselves in order to care for others hits home on a logical level, but goes against the grain for people for whom putting their needs first is foreign.

We need to remember and be wary that some people will just keep responding if we keep asking them. Dr Rob Gordon - Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Even if you are a victim at the same time you put your own trouble aside and concentrate on supporting others and forget about supporting yourself. This is true not just in the hospital situation, true elsewhere too. Akiko Sasaki – Ishinomaki Red Cross Hospital

People in this field put others' needs first and their needs second. Dr Tomoko Osawa – Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress

It is really uncomfortable for people to allow themselves to think about themselves and not the people they're supporting. Jodie Bowker – formerly of EACH, Victoria

People say I should slow down, and I know I should. But that's not how I am built. How do you slow down a speed boat? Brad Quilliam - Kinglake Ranges Business Network

I think that personal factors which can negatively affect a support worker are a sense of self-sacrifice, an overwhelming sense of justice, and inflexibility. If a support worker form gets caught up in these factors, then that person will not be able to carry on with the job and lead a healthy life for very long. Kyoko Nakatani - Psychologist, Kobe

Guilt: Prioritizing looking after yourself is particularly difficult when the constant comparison of your own needs against that of others within the affected community leaves people feeling comparatively undeserving of care or comfort.

Everyone is so impacted. They feel they shouldn't have the opportunity to be relaxed. Machiko Kamiyama – Yamagata University/Care Miyagi

There is the mentality in our volunteers that "I don't have it that bad" and they minimize their own stresses. They push them down, push down. They are constantly looking at their stuff in comparison to other people. Valerie Cole – American Red Cross

A sense of responsibility: The tendency to personally take on the sense of responsibility for the outcome and well-being for others is a heavy weight.

Volunteers often have heroic aspirations, doing something good and doing this for the affected people. There is the tendency to be strong, wanting to do good and taking on responsibility. Louise Steen Kryger - Psychosocial Reference Center, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Recovery is so complex. Where poverty exists, these are complex problems, which are difficult to solve but post-disaster we take on a responsibility to personally solve it. Greg Ireton - Advisor, Victorian Government They feel responsibility for outcomes. For example a man referred to a psychiatrist... They did the right things, but the outcome was not good so they feel responsibility. Dr Toshiharu Makishima - Japanese Red Cross Medical Center

The fear of getting it wrong: Public, donor and organizational scrutiny are prevalent but perhaps not as pervasive as self-scrutiny. Supporters tend to be conscientious - their own harshest critic - and because their motives are to help, unintentionally doing harm is one of their greatest fears.

I am feeling unsupported and disconnected from my organization. I do the work anyway but I have no way of knowing if what I'm doing is good for the people. I am supporting the people anyway. Without support I am doing what I hope is best - but it creates anxiety. Nobuko Kamata - Japan

I think one of the core stressors is the concept of 'Do no harm.' It is the number one listed principle on a page of 20. What is going to be doing no harm at this stage? Are we going to be doing harm by rushing in there? Do you have to wait and see? That do no harm pressure means people wait too long or they are not sure that what they are doing is helpful. Alexina Baldini - CIMA

Self-imposed pressure to be strong: Many personality traits or personal viewpoints of the role interact with and are shaped by cultural and societal expectations. For example, in New Zealand and Australia the culture of self-reliance and mental toughness are revered. In Japan the virtue of diligence and *tatemae* (or 'firewall'—the hiding of the inner core, *honne*, behind a presentable impenetrable exterior) influence the ability to admit challenges, ask for support and acknowledge the need for self-care. In the U.S., as well as elsewhere, the adrenalin-fueled, tough-minded emergency management stereotype created expectations of invulnerability. Nearly all interviewed discussed these cultural or societal beliefs, which in turn played a large part in shaping their own individual reluctance to consider their own needs. There is therefore this huge pressure to be strong; self-imposed, culturally imposed, and, with community need evident, situationally-imposed. As most working in recovery have not done so before, there is also a tendency to feel the need to prove yourself. There is an underlying anxiety, "Am I up for the task?" Jodie Bowker, who was not alone in feeling this way amongst participants, articulates this well (right).

It is like the John Wayne complex where you can only show strength or the feeling that you are Atlas with the responsibility of holding the whole world on your shoulders. Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross

It is a matter of pride, you don't admit if you have problems... There is the idea of Samurai silence, Samurai are not meant to complain or show their emotions. Anon – Japan

There are real stress issues. People are so enthusiastic and seriously committed. The Japanese culture carries the virtue of diligence. The effect of the disaster is so huge you feel there is no time to take a break and it is discouraged. Corporate society pressures you to work hard. It is in this culture that we've been trying to educate about the importance of self-care. Ryo Goto – Plan Japan

I didn't have a background in counseling or in emergency management but was surrounded by people who did. For others it was second nature and there was the expectation that you get it and understand it. I always felt a little bit on the outside, without a qualification or background experience. I felt I had to fight to prove myself to myself as well as to everyone else. Most of us go through life feeling like we are bluffing it. If I start talking and open up is that what I'll end up admitting? Jodie Bowker – formerly of EACH, Victoria

New to self-care? An important consideration too is that whilst self-care is vital to working in recovery, and beneficial to everyday life regardless of whether there has been a disaster, many report not having previous need or experience of self-care practices. Workers find themselves attempting to learn and implement self-care strategies, which feel foreign, whilst under pressure with competing priorities and very little time.

I had a supportive manager but I was told off for not looking after myself. But self-care was not something I understood as it had never been a part of my life – it felt foreign and self-indulgent. Jodie Bowker – formerly of EACH

I didn't have emotional health practices. You often don't have it unless you've gone through something previously. I understand now that it is proactive and not reactive. Kate Riddell - Firefores

Self-care is important but it is difficult because there is no previous knowledge, no skills, no feeling for it. Dr Toshiharu Makishima – Japanese Red Cross Medical Center

Appendix H: The bricks – from the organizational level

When the going gets tough the tough get going:

Following on from an earlier theme, is the feeling from participants that there is an organizational expectation that as supporters you should 'cope', anything less being seen as an indictment of your capabilities.

They are under stress but not in a position to complain. It is not acceptable – organizationally and culturally. Ryo Goto – Plan Japan

But who takes care of us? We are expected to be okay. It is a given. Kerry Symons - Visiting Nurse Service of New York

How to explain to your leaders, without being called weak? Where people are expected not to complain about the hard work or to vent because it is seen as a weakness or vulnerability. This is doing a disservice to our people. Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross

We have been expecting people to work to the point of exhaustion. We're responsible for that. Let's stop being surprised when our disaster staff are emotionally affected. Let's have a strategy in place. We owe it to them to do that. Or you end up with long-term issues due to the fact that organizations expected our workers to 'put up with' the stress without any help from us! It's not right, a sign that we didn't care enough. Sandra Shields - Disaster Mental Health Co-Lead, California, American Red Cross

Role modeling: Having team leaders and managers who model long hours and self-sacrifice creates a culture that makes it difficult for workers to look after their own needs without guilt. In Japan it was noted that it is not acceptable to leave work until your manager has done so, and in all settings it was noted that manager work behavior set the scene or culture for the team. It should also be acknowledged, as Dr Rob Gordon points out, all is not equal if workers are set a high bar and expected to match their leaders in terms of stress and work hours. The impacts of the stress, without the same access to influence, are potentially greater for the worker than the manager.

Senior managers often have temperaments that thrive on stress. A Whitehall study of English public servants showed a direct linear relationship between mortality and position in the hierarchy. The higher up the healthier you were and the longer you lived. The mitigating factor for the stress was the sense of control. Those naturally inclined to work in stressful situation had a sense of control over their own destiny and the destiny of others. Dr Rob Gordon - Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Judgment: As previously mentioned, it can take courage and self-insight to consider your own needs when working in recovery and to expect or request support. There is often fear as to whether advocating for your own needs will change how you are perceived or have negative consequences. Approaching stress-management from the perspective of coping or not coping illustrates a false divide, often leading to judgment about the person themselves or their abilities whilst disregarding the load or circumstances. The result is the feeling of being punished or considered inadequate.

How much can I tell you? You're my boss, but is it safe for me to say this if I am struggling? Will I be punished or supported? Anon - New York

I made a pact with my manager that I would go to him if I was feeling stressed and I did and it backfired. If I share how I am feeling then will I be taken off this work? Jodie Bowker – formerly of EACH, Victoria

'Unhinged advocacy' A lack of understanding of the nature and impacts of stress within organizations impacts the ability for workers to feel they can ask for the support they require without feeling they are affronting the organization or coming across as 'unhinged'.

I felt that I had to advocate in a fairly unhinged way to get the balance back.
Anne Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges

I would try to speak to them and make them understand the situation. We saw these scenes every day and had to talk to the people every day – for me it was so real but for them it was in their imagination. I felt I was showing myself to be crazy when I tried to increase understanding in the organization. They thought I was emotional – 'Is she okay? She looks so crazy.' Mie Kashiwade – Plan Japan

You feel like you are challenging senior leadership personally if you ask for what is needed. Anon – Kinglake Ranges

The disconnect: By far the most commonly noted stressor at the organization level was a disconnect between distantly-located personnel (management, governance, head offices, funding bodies...) and the local reality. This mismatch of understanding was the cause of a great deal of frustration and distress. Considerable effort and energy can be expended by supporters in attempting to increase the understanding of those based elsewhere.

People who work in the affected areas but are not living it and go back at the end of the day, for example, insurance assessors where their office is based in a location where their boss or team has no idea. They arrive back into their slick air-conditioned office where they talk about KPIs and have no idea... Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

Senior management and governance? They have no clue. They need to know what's going on. No, they need to care what's going on. Some who don't know might care if they knew, others wouldn't care even if they knew. They look at the big picture and something they don't see is that the smaller picture is important – sometimes more important. Scott Kemins - Building Commissioner, Long Island

I would imagine as well that it would take a great deal of patience and diplomacy, which we know everyone is a bit short of during this time, to sit in meetings with people who have no freaking idea and to work constructively. Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

The top-down approach:

Micromanagement or bureaucratic, top-down decision making were frequently articulated hindrances impinging on the ability to respond to needs in the community in a timely and relevant way. Insufficient consideration of local perspectives, experience or expertise in decision making, left people feeling undervalued and with little feeling of control over decisions and service direction.

With top-down power systems the person in charge of helping people is lower down the chain and has less say. Local staff work hard and sometimes could insist their opinion but it is against the culture in local government systems where they are expected to follow orders. They often made their own decisions but didn't record or share them. Prof Yasuyuki Sawada - University of Tokyo

Well meaning, but at times ill-informed decision making by people in control of recovery, (who were often based remotely) made our role more difficult. Kate Riddell - Firefores

Various things happen in the affected area but because headquarters is elsewhere you do not have the power to act immediately. You need the okay from headquarters. Anon - Japan

One of the causes we had to fight for was community engagement. The workers in the bureaucratic space talked about community engagement but for the community at large it didn't translate to them feeling engaged and consulted with. Decisions were foregone conclusions. It was tokenistic. The choices weren't ones the community might've wanted. It is like having the option of having your head chopped off or a lobotomy or move to another country. Which one would you like to choose? Anon - Kinglake Ranges

Our expertise and knowledge is not always accepted. The Japanese local government officers have pride that they can manage it. Mie Kashiwade - Plan Japan

Not feeling valued:

Feeling disregarded and unappreciated is particularly painful, whether as a volunteer or staff member. Although, almost without exception, those working in recovery do not do so for recognition, the role can be thankless (particularly for those in a service role). Whilst thanks is not the motivation, positive feedback for the considerable effort expended is important.

There was accumulated grief of not being valued and not having their expertise listened to. Dr Rob Gordon - Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

We had heard from one of the staff that management had stated in a meeting that they needed more funds because the lack of funding was the reason they didn't have quality staff. So we do not feel valued for our skills and what we do. And they are not willing to spend money to enhance existing staff. Ayami Sugai - Japan

When compared to the volunteers, there is the feeling that you get paid for it, so that's all the thanks and support you need. Jodie Bowker - formerly of EACH

The view that volunteers don't matter much. Many people feel you can always get new volunteers. This fails to recognize that volunteers are our backbone and it is not easy to get good volunteers. Louise Steen Kryger - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

There is a gap between those visible and valued and those toiling away but not recognized. Anne Leadbeater - Kinglake Ranges

Lack of direction or guidance:

In direct contrast to a feeling of lack of autonomy impacting on their ability to perform their role supporting the community, unclear organizational direction, role expectations, indecision and lack of guidance or involvement were also found to pose a significant challenge.

If the remit isn't valuable or useful and you cannot successfully advocate up the line then you are left with a choice of either to sell to punters what they don't need or to go rogue. Anne Leadbeater - Kinglake Ranges

The head office has decisive power but don't necessarily use it so there is a strange in between sense of where orders are coming from. I wish they could be more decisive both on a macro level in terms of a plan and micro with problems and decisions. They don't know or can't decide so it becomes difficult for people in the affected area, so we felt, just leave it to us so we can do what is needed. Anon - Japan

When we are facing chaos being met by bewilderment in management is not helpful. It helps to have some guidance from higher up, even if it is an estimated plan. Anon - Kinglake Ranges

I don't see the outcome, the desired achievement, the goal of the organization to be clear. As a member of the xxx (organization name removed) I want to pursue this path in order to obtain the goal, but because I cannot see the goal it is so difficult. ... Yes, flexibility, yes trust, but not without support, concern for our problems or guidance. Nobuko Kamata - Japan

People wanted more guidance. Without background information how do we support people? Guidelines and information, practical and simple, from a good evidence base, for those struggling with how to provide support this was a relief. Mie Kashiwade - Plan Japan

Fast, tangible, siloed, concrete. A related stressor is the pressure for short-term measurable results which result in unrealistic goals, divorced from the longer term sustainable needs and from the psychosocial needs of communities which are less tangible but no less vital. Educating and advocating with management, decision makers and funders for psychosocial needs and longer term community outcomes (and the associated funding terms) takes a considerable amount of energy and when unsuccessful leads to a great deal of angst.

There is time pressure, but post disaster plans and guidelines are not achievable within the set timeframes. We still need to plan for the longer term outcomes. There is pressure for the targets to be achievable and if they are not ticked off in the timeframe then we have failed. Greg Ireton – Advisor, Victorian Government

The government emphasizes resilience in terms of hard buildings, constructions. They recognize more than before psychosocial care but it takes more effort to create consensus that it is as important as the concrete. Ryo Goto – Plan Japan

We are appealing to people with the bundle of money who don't come from a social or community work background. They are asking us to prove or disprove impossible things. It is outside of their understanding. They don't understand or respect how community organizations work and so their demands are nonsensical. Sylvia Thomas – COGA, Kinglake

It took a long time and a lot of work before the communities would accept me. With reporting I really struggled. I have nothing to write. The processes are not captured in the reporting. Teiichiro Yotsukura – Japan

The emphasis is on property so there are lost opportunities to consider societal opportunities. Helen Goodman – COGA, Kinglake

Targets such as so many funding applications by x date means we are measured by quantified numbers which puts pressure on the quality of service. We are less able to do the stuff that really helps. Advocacy goes unnoticed and this is what I can do best to assist someone. Even the database is number focused. There is no space to put anything except the numbers. Emily Gonzalez – FEGS, Long Island

Every dimension of community and personal life is simultaneously affected. It is only in large scale disasters that this happens. Yet experts are only concerned with a particular aspect of life, imperative to getting their work done. They came out to talk to communities but didn't know community dynamics and couldn't take it into account. They came across as insensitive. ... It is often not possible to engage them in an educative orientation process as they don't think it is their area of interest. Dr Rob Gordon - Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Consequences of inappropriate recovery programing:

It is worth noting that the consequences of imposed or ill-informed recovery programing become a stressor for those supporting communities.

I was most vulnerable when I heard things were going wrong in the community. The sheer frustration, not being able to influence it in any way. The sense that it is harder than it needs to be is exhausting. The interventions, the misdirected effort and energy into things that weren't sustainable. It is exhausting to watch and even more exhausting to mop up the mistakes. Anne Leadbeater - Kinglake Ranges

Political pressures and the speed treadmill:

Pressure from the political or from donor and or public expectations shape decisions and impose the need for speed—a drive that can also be self-imposed but rarely constructive, as Anne Leadbeater (right) describes.

So much was determined by government agendas and election political pressures. Brad Quilliam – Kinglake Ranges Business Network

Nothing is as urgent as it seems. There are some provisions which need to happen quickly such food, water, and shelter sorted quickly, but three years later we are still on this rapid response treadmill. We never stop and go 'you know what? The emergency has abated and now we can be a bit more thoughtful and a bit more purposeful.' We are still in that 'get stuff out the door' modality and it's not useful because it keeps people in this heightened sense of urgency and adrenalin and even though nothing bad is happening right this instant we are still running around like crazy. You end up running on the treadmill for years. You've stopped even recognizing what not doing it looks like... But there should be a time when you can think I should be able to put the brakes on for a bit now. But unfortunately it doesn't work out because at the same time as working in recovery, the investigations engender new policies which have to be written which then mean new processes have to be designed, then they have to be implemented and so the cycle continues if you let it. Part of the challenge is that like anything else, you spend enough time on this treadmill and it feels safe and comfortable although not entirely pleasant. You kind of get, "I'm exhausted and miserable but that's alright because that's how I was yesterday" so it almost becomes the modus operandi, the environment or culture that you are familiar with. Familiarity and certainty are things to cling to. This is a terrible process, I hate it, but it's the same so in its sameness there's comfort. Anne Leadbeater - Kinglake Ranges

Business as usual: A common 'brick', whether from within the organization or without in relation to funders and government decision makers, was a pressure to return to business as usual—a pressure that is imposed despite not aligning to the local service provision reality and community needs.

There is real frustration that the system treats recovery as the tail end of something they want to close off and forget with a real pressure to go back to business as usual. There are a number of layers to the comment, "Aren't you over it yet?" There is the high political level shaped by the election cycle where they want it dealt with so it makes them look good. There is the bureaucratic level where they want to move on because having to manage recovery is a pain in the bum once funding and resources are scarce. And then there is the broader community response where it is either a genuine question asked out of ignorance with no malice or it comes judgment loaded. Helen Goodman - COGA

Insufficient resourcing: Funding, access to information and knowledge, transport, tools and material resources, access to meeting spaces and facilities were all causes of stress. Inadequate human resourcing—people—was the greatest concern and linked directly to the feeling of being overwhelmed by a large load. Large client caseloads, insufficient supporters to meet demand, or lack of administrative support, which drew precious time away from activities ‘at the coalface’ were particularly worrisome to the supporters. For some organizations this was a function of the funding available, for other organizations the choice is taken not to fund added workers, support function roles, or resources, in response to the pressure to be seen by donors or the public to be frugal in program administrative costs. Regardless of the reason, whether avoidable or unavoidable, insufficient resourcing adds significantly to the burden on those with a role in recovery.

One of the major stresses is not having enough resources to do the job. And by resources I mean, time, money, people. So not just physical resources. Organizational priorities could be a stressor if it results in not having enough support and people for the work...

Valerie Cole – American Red Cross

Because of their workloads they don't have enough time to meet together to share and discuss issues. There is either too much money for the human capacity to deliver or insufficient money. Prof Yasuyuki Sawada - University of Tokyo

Lack of training or preparation of supporters: There appears to be a gap with regards to adequate training and preparation of personnel. Volunteers and staff are often ill prepared for the mismatch between expectations of what they thought a role supporting others in recovery entailed and the reality. They may be unaware of the potential risks, how to safeguard their well-being and increase their satisfaction from the role.

More time needs to be taken on induction to help people get a cultural understanding of the situation. They are unprepared for the level of anger they experience when they go into the community. Greg Ireton – Advisor, Victorian Government

Workloads: Even when stress is acknowledged within an organization and self-care is encouraged, heavy workloads can make considering your own needs feel unachievable. Self-care is added to the long list of things that you know you should be doing and people then bear the burden of guilt for another responsibility that they are unable to attend adequately to. When volunteers or staff are tired, they are encouraged to take a break. Yet doing so feels more daunting than not. This is due to the fact that tidying up work to meet deadlines over the time you will be away, and setting up provisions for continued support whilst you are on leave, adds to current demands and returning from a break to a mountainous backlog caused by your absence feels self-defeating. Handing projects over to others, without adequate resourcing and faith in the ability for them to be continued, feels similarly implausible.

The expectation of self-care, taking breaks, attending workshops, rather than helping they can add to the pressure. Looking after your own practical needs and self-care becomes something else to feel guilty about not being able to do. Anon - Japan

Saying you should go, take a break, but no provisions in place to relieve me... It feels placatory. Anne Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges

There is the extra kicking of yourself, the shame and guilt, when you cannot practice what you preach with regards to self-care. Anon – New York

The biggest challenge for me was admitting that I needed more balance for my family. I still needed to volunteer but with the demands as they were, was I being irresponsible? Should I put it aside? But then I look about and consider who can I pass the buck to? But everyone is in the same boat. You need to feel comfortable and confident in who you can hand your projects to. Fiona Leadbeater – Volunteer, Kinglake Ranges

Additional expectations:

When an environment is already chaotic and the load feels barely manageable additional expectations, tasks or changes are often added without realization of the impacts.

Other stressors to be avoided are things like changing procedures mid process and adding new time constraints for workers, etc. Christie Wrightson - American Red Cross

Large NGOs or government organizations working in the space expect community to work as volunteers to provide them with the information they need to do their job. They are paid to do their job to help the community recover yet they impose huge time costs to communities. Anon - Kinglake Ranges

In addition to all the stress of working with the bushfire you add in a restructure. The change associated with the fires was huge, then there was change in staff turnover due to stress, then add a change in structure. This leads to anxiety and panic as a worker where it feels like there were no catching your breath moments in the last five years. If the fire hadn't hit we wouldn't have had this feeling. Change would be normal, but adding the change on top of everything else... Anon - Kinglake Ranges

Insincere-feeling support:

At best, encouragement to take time off or practice self-care, without addressing the workload, can demonstrate a lack of understanding or feel placatory. At worst, support can feel insincere—more about ticking the boxes than derived from a position of genuinely caring for the supporters.

As a manager or team leader trying to support your people, you will compound the problem unless you can use respect and empathy. Fiona Leadbeater - Volunteer Kinglake Ranges

The feeling that HR are saying you must go to supervision to avoid a stress claim says you're not worried about me you're worried about your organization. This becomes another organizational obligation rather than support. Insincere feeling support becomes another stressor. Dr Rob Gordon - Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Inequity of support or recognition:

When support or recognition for volunteers or workers depends upon the attitude, ability or knowledge of the particular manager, the support received by different individuals and teams may vary. Inequity can be the cause of both guilt and resentment.

A real stress can be inequity within or between staff teams. This can lead to feelings of resentment towards those who have support or recognition or conversely, guilt or concern for those who don't. Kate Minto - Mandala Foundation

There was a drive for household goods but only for three of five staff because our organization ran out of steam before collecting for the last two. This offered solace to three but crushed another two. Anne Leadbeater - Kinglake Ranges

Inaccessible management: Many felt a stressor was management being inaccessible, whether located locally or distantly. Some supporters felt their managers were not present or were uncaring. Others felt they were inaccessible due to their own workload and stress levels or because they were unsuited, unprepared or unsupported in their management role.

Managers play a key role in supporting the team so they need to be adequately prepared and trained for their staff-care responsibilities and understand the relevant organizational policies. Management related stressors, such as being inaccessible, communicating poorly, or being over-stretched or not coping, these can cause further stress for the team. Kate Minto – Mandala

Foundation If I raised a problem, my manager would counter with a larger problem of her own, so the conversation would become more and more volatile. It wasn't a helpful support role. Ayami Sugai – Japan

The squeeze: When there is not a common understanding of the realities within an organization, a team leader can be sandwiched between ensuring the service is responsive to the local context and the associated needs of their staff, and competing organizational and political pressures – creating added and unnecessary stress for the team leads.

The team leader will cop flak from both sides. They are stuck in the middle. Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

I was in a difficult position with divided loyalties between head office and the people in the area - local staff and the community. We have a saying itabasami which translates to 'a fish sandwiched between two boards' which is like the English 'piggy in the middle'. Anon - Japan

Team conflict: Here we have your typical chicken and egg scenario in that increased stress levels and role demands create conditions for team conflict, which in turn is described as a source of stress.

Any personality conflicts or issues amongst staff get heightened, because they are working in a confined space, closely with these people for a long period of time. Valerie Cole – American Red Cross

Everybody felt forgotten, whatever group they were part of. Everyone felt like everyone else was getting the attention. It seems childish and petty now, but at the time it felt very real. Peter Miller – World Trade Center Survivors Network

Down the track there is the fatigue element, which results in people becoming irritable and short tempered and therefore less tolerant. Emotional climate gets very tatty in the second and third year, people get quite reactive. Dr Rob Gordon - Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery

Contracts and uncertainty:

Short-term employment contracts that characterize recovery work are commonly a source of uncertainty and strain for staff. Short-term contracts also define the way an organization views and invests in its staff: being less likely to prioritize professional development and more likely to impose timeframes driven by the contract term rather than what is most feasible in terms of workload.

If you are working as a case-worker in recovery, your job is technically time limited so you are essentially working yourself out of a job. That is pretty crazy-making, especially because you never know when the funding stream may stop. Working in that scenario every day brings significant financial stress with it. Christie Wrightson - American Red Cross

My contract finishes in August. I worry. I worry while I am helping others. What next for me and my family? My son is six years old. I need a good job so I have money for his education. Teiichiro Yotsukura - Japan

There is regular training for permanent staff only. Teiichiro Yotsukura - Japan

The length of contracts. If you go into a piece of work thinking this is a permanent job you approach it in a different manner, not in a 'response' frame of mind where you work in an unsustainable way. That would help. We are not realistic about the time scale of recovery. The commitment should be two to three years or three to four years of life, not one to two. Otherwise you are over-optimistic as to when things will finish and move on without completion and you miss a sense of achievement. If contracts are either ended or renegotiated after a year you don't get the opportunity for appraisal, support and development. Ted Tuthill - British Red Cross

Conditional funding:

Supporters often felt that the conditions attached to funding detracted from attempts to attain the desired outcomes: reducing freedom and flexibility to respond to the needs or costing time and energy that could be better spent supporting the community. Unintended negative consequences were also noted. With funders and supporters, in most cases, wanting to achieve the same ends—sustainable and meaningful positive outcomes for communities—the conditions seemed to create a barrier to the shared vision and add a burden to those supporting in the community.

Having targets attached to funding is not a problem. The problem is, when you are accountable to government, the way you behave has to be different because it is more bureaucratic. Before we received any funding we were able to go forth and do what needed to be done, how we saw it needed doing. But after receiving funding we were put into partnerships we wouldn't necessarily have chosen and at no time were we the lead agency. The belief we held that we should be in communities, through outreach, providing a service that suits the residents. This approach wasn't approved of or supported. We had to report to these other agencies ... forced partnerships where there wasn't true collaboration because we had different ideas and beliefs about the work we were all doing. Anon - Victoria

The policy and accounting requirements, the guidelines relating to donated funds, it all impacts sustainability. The outcomes would have been exactly what the funding intended but we had to change what we were doing to fit the requirements, and it also created divisions and ructions within the group. The funding body, they don't see what that looks like in terms of consequences in real communities and real people. Every time people get offside it damages relationships in the community. Someone will say, "I've had a blue with so and so and I'm not helping anymore." It is often due to outside influences and it didn't need to happen. It is nearly always about decision making. Fiona Leadbeater - Volunteer, Kinglake Ranges

Earmarked funds. One particular fund will only want to pay for insulation but by the time the funding comes through I have seven houses needing sheet-rocking... By the time we got the funding released for demos, it was thirteen months. Thirteen months ago we had a lot of demos but now it is not relevant, the money would be better spent on a rebuild... Mike Hoffman - Yellow Boots, Staten Island

Short-term funding: Funding terms, especially, being too short, were not amenable to sustainable recovery goals.

If funders pay a lot of money at once they will cause problems. People expect projects that are begun to continue. If we don't fund long-term, and the needs continue, more issues are created in the long run than are solved. Tohru Shirakawa – JVC

We want our project not to be a flash in a pan. We want it to be sustainable. But now three years have passed, although there was lots of money and aid early on, it is harder to access. It is causing problems and making us more fatigued. Takahiro Ito – Fukkou University Alliance

Funding was a stressor. We had three month, six month, and eighteen-month grants. Having to do the justification and reports and write up a new grant every three to six months... Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross

Reluctance to fund personnel: The reluctance for funders to fund salaries and personnel placed organizations under pressure, arguably diminishing support to communities. For the staff, community leader and volunteers this resulted in increased pressures relating to workload and to financial strain. Financial sacrifices were being made in order to continue to support recovery in a voluntary capacity; including lost income potential, depleted nest eggs, adding earning pressure to spouses; with ramifications beyond the individual themselves. The reality is that people are the greatest resource. People behind the scenes and people 'at the coalface' are both vital to the success of community-oriented organizations.

People aren't funded. There is the idea that volunteers are the answer. But there is a huge administrative load. Keeping the website up to date... There is financial pressure. Your ability to volunteer is limited when you have to worry about making a living. Volunteer hours are so scarce and precious, often undervalued so if you could free hours up you could then put your volunteer time where you want to, in order to have the most impact, rather than on admin, such as building bridges and potential sources of resources for survivors. And people wanted a specific menu of volunteering options, which needs people who could devote time to get everything set up. Volunteers too take managing and more time behind the scenes to do all the stuff that doesn't show. Peter Miller – World Trade Center Survivors Network

Appendix I: Blog post - First-time parenthood?

Okay, this may sound a little odd, but it strikes me that working in recovery is a lot like first-time parenthood. How so?

When you embark on the journey you know it will be one of the most meaningful and valuable roles you will play, but also one of the most stressful. If you are lucky you might know others who have been there before who can speak of the challenges, but this will provide you with an incomplete appreciation of the magnitude and nature of the task ahead. Nothing can really prepare you for the relentlessness, the sleeplessness, the exhaustion, the anxiety, and, hopefully, the satisfactions.



Most people who work in disaster recovery are working within their own communities and so, more often than not, have not walked this path before. I count myself in this category. And so we embark into what is for us, uncharted territory, meeting challenges that are complex and novel, stretching our creative thinking abilities, and chasing a forever moving and morphing target. As with parenting, just when you think you have finally worked out the solution to the current challenge, a new challenge presents itself. You know that what will work for today may be irrelevant to the needs of next month or next year. And truth be told, as satisfying as this work can be, it also has the potential to be downright scary. I have found myself over the last three years perched on a precarious seesaw teetering between excitement and terror.

Not having done this before, how will we know for sure that we are up to the task? In reality, we don't—not until we come out the other end, whatever or whenever that may be. And so, entrusted with this role, we want to prove ourselves to be capable; not just to others but to ourselves. Given this pressure, how difficult it can be then to admit that there are times when the sheer relentless and enormity of the task threatens to overwhelm us. And how refreshing it can be to learn that other parents (or recovery workers) we respect and emulate, have faced these same challenges and feelings too – that this is an expected and normal part of the process and not in any way a reflection on our capabilities.

In a conversation with a wonderfully committed woman who works with residents in temporary accommodation in a tsunami-impacted community, the relief of this realization was palpable.

“I do the best I can. I try to make the right decisions, but how do I know what I am doing will be the right thing? I worry. And I have been doubting and blaming myself and thinking that I am weak. Now you are telling me that other people feel these things too? I realize now that I am human. I feel like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders.”

So much so that I was invited to dinner and asked to please share the same sentiments with a colleague who had experienced similar worries.

Just like this dedicated woman, as parents we ruminate over decisions made, or potential missteps along the way. I am reminded that no matter how hard we try, we will not always get it right. This does not make us incapable, just human. Besides, have you ever met a perfect parent?

And just like in parenthood, there is the constant feeling that whatever challenge you are now facing is a new one. Parenthood and recovery are humbling. Both keep us feeling like novices, no matter how far along the path we find ourselves, we are still learning. Sometimes when the path ahead feels daunting, I have found it really helps to turn around for a moment. As parents, whether we have a three-month old tot, a tantruming toddler or a tempestuous teenager, even though right now whatever challenge we are facing may be new, stretching our experience and knowledge and sometimes leaving us feeling inadequate, when we look back we are reminded of how far we have come and how much we have learned.

In recent meetings with phenomenal people with decades of experience in multiple disasters my training wheels have felt as large as tractor tyres. Yet as we share insights and experiences, it becomes clear, that as much as we in Canterbury are still learning because our recovery continues, we have also developed and acquired knowledge through our experience thus far. It is empowering to stop and reflect and realize that we too have valid and valuable knowledge to contribute. So when the darling toddler is tantruming and you feel like shutting yourself in the pantry or the demands of recovery feel overwhelming, it might help to take a moment to turn around, look back, and celebrate all that has been learned and achieved. Take a moment to savour those achievements, and that hard earned knowledge. Go ahead, turn around!

Appendix J: Risks of not supporting the supporters

The supporter		The residents		
Damaged by the experience	Feeling torn between competing roles	Damage to clients	Lose connection with the community	resilience and loss of knowledge within the sector as people leave
Worker injury	Poor decision making	Frustration of constant staff turnover	Workforce has a breaking point	Staff 'go rogue'—they implement decisions locally under the radar
Effects on general health—both short and long-term	Anger	Decreased ability to provide support 5 years on	Lose your best people	Reduced capacity for other programs
Exhaustion	Depression	Prolonged recovery and the associated impact on well-being, quality of life and productivity	The money invested in the program lacks quality	Reduced integrity of the project and reduced likelihood of meeting goals
Exacerbation of pre-disaster injuries or health conditions	Lost ability to monitor own expenditure of energy and exhaustion levels	The people we support begin taking on our stress, worry about us	Increased sick leave	Loss of perspective
Mental health impacts	Diminished confidence in own abilities	Exacerbated rather than reduced disaster impacts	Impacts potential for sourcing future funding	Team dysfunction
Eating disorders	Suicide	Diminished capacity of community leaders and volunteers affects the glue of communities	Loss of valuable experience and knowledge	Short fuse with the community
Decreased energy and vitality	Social isolation	Diminished community capacity	Inability to recruit	Diminished energy meets less capacity for consultation and collaboration
Chronic fatigue	Emotionally drained	The team/project/organization	Legal liability—failing to meet duty of care	Withdraw (barricade in office and make themselves unavailable) due to being overwhelmed
Feeling they have aged incredibly	Feeling untrusted	Negatively affects organizational mission	Lost connection and loyalty to the organization—a sense of hypocrisy	Loss of volunteers
Weight gain or loss	Feeling uncared for	Brand/reputational damage	Deteriorated atmosphere/ culture	Promotion of burnt out staff infects others with cynicism
Drug or alcohol abuse	Relationships suffer – divorce, availability for children, conflict in the family, connection in community	Poor decision making	Staff burnout	
Increased smoking	Parental guilt	Worker attrition	Guilt and worry about the staff	
Sleep problems— inability to switch off	Negative impacts for children	Constant change leads to short-term thinking	Cost of counseling and remedial support costs	
Large chunk of their life where lost a sense of happiness or quality of life	Intensity of emotional environment leading to affairs and costing marriages	Feeling overwhelmed led to prematurely shutting down the program	Decreased resourcing capacity, e.g. less ability to recruit volunteers	
Decreased faith in humanity	Loss of a sense of community	Decreased quality of support	Employee and volunteer turnover	
Grief	Creates a backlog of neglected tasks	Function less effectively	Constantly inducting new staff, bringing them up to date with the where we are at and why	
Feeling devalued	Unable to do this work in the future—ending or changing career	Decreased productivity	Breach of trust in the community when expectations are not met	
Bitter disappointment	Sacrificed own personal needs and goals leading to extreme disorientation	Decreased efficiency	Loss of community support to organization due to view of how staff are supported	
Compassion fatigue	If social supports strained and turn to organization for support which they don't receive then the worker is as vulnerable and isolated as those they are supporting	Closed thinking	Decreased sector	
Vicarious/secondary trauma		Codependency, loss of separation, boundary blur		
Pessimism, cynicism, bitterness				
Diminished trust and faith in institutions				
Forgetfulness				
Anxiety				
Fear				
Feeling trapped by community need				

Reflections on Risks

The risk to the person is considerable and self-evident. The risk to the organizational reputation is enormous and affects the potential to be able to do this in the future. And damage to the people we are supposed to be supporting when our workers are burnt out, cynical, jaded, tired. The damage is far worse than most other hazards, worse than serving up off food if someone is not faring well in a position influencing the support people get. **Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross**

I have a Dr Seuss book, which I read to my oldest kids. My youngest Jack was about to turn one at the time of the fires and he was five before I realized I hadn't read him any Dr Seuss books. I had been so preoccupied. The toll is huge. **Anon – Kinglake Ranges**

It is devastating not to get support. When your lived experience doesn't match up to the structure it feels like your fault. The organization is a touchstone and if it doesn't recognize what your experience actually means you internalize it, all the grief and stress. **Anne Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges**

Our family.... When we are time poor, the people who suffer the most are the ones we love and are closer to us because we think they can cope with it. It is easier to say no to family than a stranger or someone in need. **Anon – Kinglake Ranges**

I don't socialize the way I used to. I have an anxiety level that rises when I go and see long-term friends as the conversation always comes back to my job.... My family don't understand why I'm sh**ty. Why you can't watch the news because it makes you cry... **Jodie Bowker – formerly of EACH, Victoria**

You have to find time and energy to train a member of the team and start with lessons learned all over again. They will be naive and make mistakes and it will take a full year for them to understand what's really going on. **Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross**

The risk is that if it is true that the bar for staff care is starting to rise, then you're behind the curve. You lose the best people and you can't recruit the best people. **Dr James Guy – Headington Institute**

My four year old daughter, she was very attached to me and I wasn't there. The stress of normalcy gone and on top of that I wasn't there. As stressful as it is for you it is for them too. In emergency management there is the message to make sure your family is safe before doing EM work, but you also have to deal with them after the disaster – they have needs too. You have to take care of them long-term, it is not a short-term thing. **Scott Kemins - Building Commissioner, Long Island**

Vicarious trauma. In a traumatized environment they are hearing stories and seeing images and have immersed themselves in it and opened their hearts up to those victimized and so they are victimized themselves. Reactions are almost as strong as the reactions of the victims themselves. **Dr James Guy – Headington Institute**

I have lost hope for the organization. If there were other opportunities I would change role. I like the content of the job, but not the organization. **Anon - Japan**

Actually I don't think the costs are fully known yet. There are health issues, but what other bigger issues will there be arising another five years down the track? **Anon – Kinglake Ranges**

They are so tired. They forget how to be empathic and effective. For years they are not bright, sparky people. People saying, "I didn't smoke before this," now they are chain-smoking. A whole town of people who put on or lost lots of weight. A whole lot of people who no longer seem to fit their skin. Their pallor is off and their hair and nails are not shiny.

Kate Brady – Australian Red Cross

Committee support. The fabric of community is impacted by everyone being stretched. When you need people to circle the wagons, you haven't got capacity. **Anne Leadbeater – Kinglake Ranges**

It is so much easier to deal with someone else's stuff than your own so it postpones your own recovery work. It is easier to prioritize someone else's needs or fill in forms and applications for anyone else. **Sylvia Thomas - COGA, Kinglake**

If you don't value staff they become existentially wounded. "I worked my guts out for my organization and they don't recognize it..." Accumulated grief of not being valued, expertise not being listened to, competence... The effect is distress. **Dr Rob Gordon - Consultant psychologist in emergency recovery**

I volunteer because I like to do it, I get reward from it and would like to be able to continue to do it. If I can't then for me it is a loss of community. If I cannot contribute then it is another loss. **Fiona Leadbeater – Kinglake**

The toll on staff is monumental and the toll on clients for not having staff available is insurmountable. **Jill Hofmann – American Red Cross**

You lose the best people. We burnout the people who are most idealistic and visionary, and you hate to lose these people. **Dr James Guy – Headington Institute**

The workforce has a breaking point – the person who is your biggest asset today could drop out tomorrow. **Valerie Cole – American Red Cross**

Your worse self comes out if you are not taken care of. We can hide unhelpful traits when cared for well. But if we are frustrated with the organization, the frustration comes out somewhere - with beneficiaries or your family. For most people it will affect the way they look at the person they are supposed to help. Prejudice or the mentality, "it cannot be that bad. Other people are worse off. Get yourself together"... When they are not looked after you see all this. **Louise Steen Kryger – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies PS Center**

Staff and volunteers both departed after Katrina, Oklahoma City... We lose people who have it in their heads, how to do this, we lose expertise to mentor other people and develop policies for next time. **Diane Ryan – American Red Cross**

There is a liability issue if an employee ever sues. It is only a matter of time – there is enough research and data around standards of care. **Dr James Guy – Headington Institute**



My Wellbeing & Resilience Plan

Date:



1. Choose up to 12 cards that resonate with you and lay them on this template.



3. Take a photo and send it to a friend to keep you accountable.



2. Make any when, who or how notes around the sides to help you make it happen. This is your Plan. Simple as that!



4. Revisit and redo this often as challenges and feelings change.



Wellbeing plan

The Doing Well cards have been designed to help those supporting recovery be intentional to protect their wellbeing and sustain their efforts. The risks highlighted in this research make it clear that when it comes to protecting those who support communities after disaster, hope is not a method.

To find out more: www.hummingly.co/doingwell



If you'd like support implementing

Hummingly has created the practical resources and workshops to help make it easy to support the supporters in the wake of disaster.

The learning from this Winston Churchill Fellowship has informed Hummingly's products and approaches – all carefully designed for the recovery context because we know that time, energy and brain space are so limited after disaster.

Whether you're looking for 'plug and play' resources, self-guided workshops or Jolie's expertise for an in-person facilitated masterclasses, Hummingly is here to help make the hard road after disaster just a little easier.

About Hummingly

Hummingly brings you the trusted training and tools that leaders and organizations use to achieve hard and meaningful things when the pressure is on. Hummingly is the creation of Jolie Wills and Elizabeth McNaughton, a duo who have worked in disasters around the world for more than two decades. Jolie and Elizabeth set about creating workshops and tools that people, communities and workplaces the world over could access to do big, hard and meaningful things - and grow in the process. These proven products are based on Jolie and Elizabeth's knowledge gained in real disaster and crisis situations. They have gathered wisdom from crisis leaders, feedback from thousands of disaster survivors, scientific insights from their background in cognitive psychology and a shared passion to ready the world to rise to challenges we face. Hummingly's workshops and products are now helping thousands of people and organizations around the world.

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