Reinforce Rescuers' Resilience by Empowering a Well-being Dimension

Workshop

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Title	Human and organizational aspects affecting the wellbeing in rescue-working activity: EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), Mirror Neuron and Stress Inoculation: the role of training methods, practice and simulation for psychological risks prevention and management in emergency workers.

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Summary The wellbeing of rescuers: Relational, organizational and technical aspects that can affect rescuers' wellbeing during rescue activities: Stress inoculation, role playing and the role of mirror neurons in training, also through the use of video recordings. Relaxation techniques, psychological debriefing and EMDR in trainings

Focus of our intervention is the rescuer's wellbeing. We thought it was important to consider the many aspects that can affect him during his activity, starting from the training stages. As far as this is concerned, we devoted much attention to the benefit and the potential we found in using video recordings of trainings as a tool for learning and as a reprocessing tool, even from a psychological point of view. We will show you videos of past trainings we took part in as emergency psychologists and on what occasions we used them. We would also like to address the wellbeing topic in terms of care and protection of the psychophysical aspects after a critical event took place, or was simulated, and when the rescuers intervened (psychologists included).

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Abstract

Focus of our intervention is the wellbeing of the rescuer. The study and research on this matter came and were carried out thanks to the activity done both during trainings and simulations of the Civil Protection than real emergencies.
Our team work received contribution by some psychologists of OPP (Parma's Psychologists' Observatory: A.Sozzi, E.Pedrelli, F.Frati, A. Bocelli, T. Serra).
Wellbeing, defined as a subjective and positive emotional state together with a global life satisfaction (Diener, 1984), is strongly at risk during rescuer's emergency activities and can affect the rescuer both physically and psychologically
The rescuer's capabilities, that we think are technical "know how" and thorough knowledge, are essential to give the best performance according to the complexity and urgency of the intervention. These skills can really contribute to the rescuer's wellbeing, because they can improve the self-efficiency perception.
To effectively manage and train rescuers, it is furthermore important to consider and acknowledge the influence of interpersonal relationships on technical performances. It is, in fact, particularly important to recognize and support the typical relationships that can be created in a team with the same task and specialization, as well as in multidisciplinary teams, or teams belonging to different Institutions but operating in the same scenario.

In recent years increasing attention has been given to training activities, even through the use of the role play for interventions in artificial emergency scenarios. To recreate scenarios of massive emergencies, different Civil Protection Associations, as well as First Aid volunteer associations and the local Institutions have been involved.
In these simulations, most cases focus on improving technical performances. Lately psychologists have been asked to join the rescuers team.
During these simulations, the role-play of emotional and psychological problems occurs thanks to the cooperation between emergency psychologists and the medical team.
The introduction of the role and expertise of psychologists allowed to extend and strengthen the attention to cross support and care aspects for the psychological wellbeing of both victims and rescuers.
The psychologist must therefore consider the "wellbeing" in all the emergency scenarios and contexts, as a sum of all the components that we talked about here and the ones we will describe during our intervention.
He must first of all be aware of the complexity of each intervention in the field, and adopt a kind of approach aimed at creating and recovering wellbeing strategies, that can be used by himself as well.
Strategies on how to build, recover and maintain the wellbeing identify stress as the first danger source the rescuer has to face in his training and emergency activity.
When external events or stimuli are perceived as difficult to face compared with resources available at that moment, the individual gets stressed.
When the person's efforts are not adaptive to the external requests and/or coherent with his performance expectations, he becomes vulnerable to emotional, behavioural, cognitive and physical reactions, which can be even very difficult to manage both in the short and/or in the medium-long term.
This can happen when the sources of stress depend on the rescuer's performance, and it can also happen in case of post traumatic stress, visible in different stages after the event.
From the psychologist's specialist background and from the integration of this with the result of field experiences, the demand for a range of different tools to manage the different kinds of stress emerges, and these tools must be applicable both to the individual and to the group.
This range is still improving, and the results of our observational activity from past and present experiences lead us to see the opportunity to carry on our research of tools of efficacy.
During this speech we would like to underline that approaches like Stress Inoculation Training (SIT, Michenbaum, 1983) and the use of role playing allow the technical appraisal and let the rescuers improve their stress management skills, and all that can lead to a decrease in the risk of PTSD.
In past simulations of emergencies, we found out that the use of videotapes for the role plays is a tool that should be taken more into account. We think it is important to evaluate its potential for the rescuers' benefit, because it seems to be not only "a record of technical performances", but also an observation and learning tool about the rescuer's own defence and adaptive strategies.
In fact, during these simulations we found out that the rescuers' psychological and emotional vulnerability emerged in several situations. The fact that even in

these artificial situations there were acute stress episodes and O codes urged us to focus more on the matter of mutual influence between technical performance and internal experience of stress.
We understand that such acute stress episodes may occur during real life critical events but we can see how role playing and video recordings show that such acute stress episodes affected the simulators themselves even during the simulation. The videos show that even apparently “high immunity” simulators, who are considered 'immune' thanks to their comprehensive and strong experience, experienced acute stress, perhaps because of an incorrect self-evaluation of their own stress management skills.
The interest in the use of videos as a training and reprocessing tool for rescuers led some of us to specialize in role playing recording, so as to carry out a more accurate and comprehensive study on those same videos and use them as a mirror of reality and better educational tool through a vicar experience or through “seeing oneself from within the experience” and in the interpersonal dynamics that took place in the scenario.
Videotapes are a very known and widely used tool in other kinds of trainings, disciplines and therapies (i.e. Family Therapy and CBT).
The discovery of mirror neurons by Rizzolati, Gallese et Al., provides the evidence that when someone observes the same action performed by another person, the neurons "mirrors" the behaviour of that person, as though the observer were itself acting. Thanks to these researchers it is now proven that this can happen thanks to the motor neurons in the pre-motor cortex.
Therefore, we would like to underline the role of videos as very useful and versatile training tools, since they expose a situation in an unexpected realistic manner “as if” it were true and “as if” we were really experiencing that situation, with the consequent learning movements at the emotional, cognitive and behavioural level, at the stress management level, as well as at the level of team work dynamics.
Visual imagination activates the same brain regions that are active during visual perception and motor imagination activates the same brain regions activated the movement is really happening.
More importantly, it was possible for us to verify that the videos recorded by other operators were not focused on showing the important psychological aspects we mentioned for the goal of the trainings, thing that happened instead with the videos recorded by psychologists. We think therefore that the use of videotapes recorded by psychologists should be given more consideration in the trainings of rescuers. During this intervention we will devote part of the time to broadcasting two short videos; the first one shows the role playing of an intervention in an emergency context, and the second one shows a part of an EMDR session (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing).We think it is important to recreate and protect rescuers wellbeing in the post-role playing and post emergency stages too.For years EMDR has been proven effective in improving the individual's coping skills and in reprocessing, wherever necessary, the post traumatic aspects resulting from critical events to whom not only the victims, but also the rescuers too, are exposed during emergencies.