

Training for Central Oregon Police Chaplains
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The PEWTER Communication Process

The following information is used from an article received from the International Journal of Emergency Mental Health. It is a quarterly journal published by Chevron Publications. The article - Communicating Bad News: A Model for Emergency Mental Health Helpers; - Thomas J. Nardi; - Kathleen Keefe-Cooperman; Appears in Volume 8 – Number 3 – Summer 2006.

ABSTRACT: This article addresses the concerns of the messenger/helper who must convey tragic news to individuals and families. It offers a model to be used as a guide to ease the stress on both the deliverer and receiver of bad news. The model uses the mnemonic, PEWTER (Prepare, Evaluate, Warn, Tell, Emotional Response, Regroup), to represent the six components of the communication process.

PREPARE

- ❖ Begins with helper's preparation!
 - ❖ What is your physical condition?
 - ❖ Restroom – breath mints – odors.
 - ❖ Your own spiritual preparation.
- ❖ Combating the grim reaper image!
 - ❖ Do you ever get depressed at the thought of the responsibility?
 - ❖ Combat it by the integrity of the responsibility.
 - ❖ It must be cared for with integrity.
- ❖ Other issues to consider!

- ❖ What is the Medical history at the address? What is the criminal history at the address?
- ❖ What is the physical setting? Do you have privacy? What if they collapse?
- ❖ Is the house clear if you are at their house?
- ❖ Do you have or need a safe distance? No one else will maintain that for you but you!

EVALUATE

- ❖ Assess!
 - ❖ Assess what the family member knows or think they know.
 - ❖ Listen for a moment. It maybe your best tool.
- ❖ Clarify!
 - ❖ Depending on the news to be delivered, a few questions could assist you:
 - ❖ “What have you been told or has anyone spoken to you about_____?”

Quote

“An awareness of what the person knows and the accuracy of the information can assist the Chaplain in determining what needs to be explained or corrected.”

WARN

- ❖ Identify the event!
 - ❖ The warning is simply coming to the place that identifies the event.
 - ❖ i.e. “There has been a bad car accident and your husband was involved.
- ❖ Pause!
 - ❖ Pause to allow them to register this information.
 - ❖ I’m sorry to tell you that your husband did not survive – he died at The scene – the hospital – en route -

TELL

- ❖ Use simple, everyday speech!
 - ❖ Medical terminology, criminal investigation or law enforcement language will only confuse and may require you to explain more than you want or are capable of!
 - ❖ Simple language says – “we are equals in this time of your loss and grief” The tone of voice should be direct – soft – clear – compassionate rather than robotic – “just the facts mame”
- ❖ Don’t do an investigation!
 - ❖ In the part of telling it is better for the Chaplains to leave criminal investigation knowledge with the agency that you are serving.
 - ❖ Allow them to give information as they see fit.

- ❖ Warning!
- ❖ Furthering conversation may bring about unneeded stress.
- ❖ Continued questioning may arouse or create hostility. We need to be careful.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

- ❖ Pay close attention!
- ❖ Pay close attention to the verbal and nonverbal skills.
- ❖ An emotional breakdown would necessitate immediate care and a break from any further information until they are stabilized.
- ❖ There are times that laughter may be the reaction.
- ❖ There are times that Denial will be exhibited.
- ❖ A complete lack of Emotion may be the experience as well.
- ❖ Follow up at the scene or in the next day or two may be needed – is most often needed!

REGROUP

- ❖ What's next?
- ❖ What is the next course of action? This could vary from how do we get our loved one home, to the vehicle towed, personal affects – how do we clean our home?
- ❖ We should be prepared in this phase to assist with resources and answer basic questions.
- ❖ Referral for pastoral care.
- ❖ No piece of paper with names on it will be as valuable as the professional and caring attitude of the Chaplain.