



Harbor Crest

Comprehensive Counseling Group

978 Route 45 • Suite L7 • Pomona, New York 10970 • (845) 354-9200

Counseling, Psychotherapy and Hypnosis • Serving Children, Adolescents and Adults

To whom it may concern:

I am a therapist specializing in cases of trauma, among other specialties. In searches of Hurricane Sandy and mental health I was concerned in the absence of planning for not only during this crisis, but afterwards.

I don't have a clear idea of where to send this information. You have many people traumatized by Sandy and the short and long term problems below will occur:

- 1) The emotional and psychological impact on children, adolescents and adults will increase; as anger and the rebuilding occurs depression and other feelings will replace it.
- 2) You can expect secondary trauma to emergency workers, police, fire, doctors, clergy, recovery workers and others. Sick days, health problems, anxiety, alcohol and substance abuse and marriage problems will occur
- 3) Therapists, and the need for development and training for therapists to provide them with the expertise in trauma (not just the immediate incidents or CISD), is necessary because of repeated disappointing results I often see occur in my or other geographic area.
- 4) Planning and the coordination on some level to both make sure there are providers in the affected areas needs to occur and be publicized. Emergency response workers need to be approached differently as they would most often say "I'm cool, I can handle it."

If these needs are being addressed, great. If you are not the correct people, please forward. I am not important, but just want to help. Please, if possible, just ensure that these are addressed; otherwise negligence of at least exploring these issues can and will have consequences.

I have attached several pages as just the beginning of an outline that should be addressed by someone. Other more immediate needs of shelter, housing and such needs to come first, but the psychological needs not only have occurred but will be here for years. You can reach me at 845-354-9200 or cell 845-821-1635. Email is randy@harbor-crest.com, and the website is <http://harbor-crest.com>. My best wishes and concerns are with you.

Sincerely,

Randolph Bleiwas LCSW,MA,CASAC,SAP,ICADC,CHt
Director, Harbor Crest Counseling
*Member: American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress
National Center for Crisis Management
American Psychotherapy and Medical Hypnosis Association*



Harbor Crest

Comprehensive Counseling Group

978 Route 45 • Suite L7 • Pomona, New York 10970 • (845) 354-9200

Counseling, Psychotherapy and Hypnosis • Serving Children, Adolescents and Adults

HURRICANE SANDY AND THE MENTAL HEALTH AFTERMATH

Attached is a sheet discussing the physiological and psychological reactions to traumas of various kinds. They can be present during the initial days and weeks after the trauma, but often have a strong effect years later. I deal with many people; children, adolescents and adults whose problems with anxiety, depression, panic attacks and more are directly correlated with their experiences. Without treatment things that have been associated with the trauma in past may be subtly triggered in the present leading to all sorts of reactions. A week, month, year or decade from now the sound of wind, water, loud noise, passing by a store, by areas destroyed and hundreds of visual, auditory or symptoms by touch can trigger a strong reaction.

In children (as in adults) nightmares, bedwetting, separation anxiety and other anxiety disorders can be present. Acting out behaviors may increase. Depression, helplessness, hopelessness and more might occur. Some may come out with feelings in drawings, or not wanting mom or dad to leave. Some may use drugs, sex, cutting or carving or burning themselves. These behaviors don't mean there is something wrong with them, but therapy would be highly recommended. The statement that I use is "what is going on with you doesn't mean there is something wrong with you, just that you have gone through something terrible that a therapist will help with.

Adults will have similar effects as well. Panic attacks, Obsessive Compulsive symptoms, depression, anxiety, and hopelessness and helplessness are the many effects that will occur. Compulsive behaviors and addictions will increase; alcohol, substance abuse, gambling and others and a higher rate of domestic violence and divorce.

Police, Fire, National Guard, EMS and others will feel the secondary effects. I've worked with police who were triggered by a cloud of black smoke he was passing that was connected to his being blown under a bus when the NY towers fell. Numbers of people at the recovery site remember the sifting and the need for sudden quiet when there was a possibility of a victim that could be recovered but was never found and another who was stationed elsewhere who was witnessing the sadness and anxiety of people looking for loved ones.

There is a culture, especially among the emergency services, fire, military and police to say "I can handle it" yet still have significant symptoms. I have seen it in those that I have worked with. Some police are affected but afraid that speaking to a therapist may hinder promotion or lead to their gun being taken away. These issues need to be addressed as well.

A large number of therapists do not treat trauma, or do it poorly from what I and other experts in trauma (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) have found. They, like the client, may avoid the issues or may not have the tools or a model to work with.

Those therapists, though, need to be mobilized now and trained for what WILL come. These effects have occurred in 9/11, and I am basing the above on many cases. Training, clinical supervision and the development of a network for the clinicians need to occur or you will have a disjointed, less effective recovery than should occur.