

Psychological First Aid for Children





Anne-Sophie Dybdal

Cand. Psych. from the University of Copenhagen in 1990. Psychologist in Danish counties, municipalities, and in private practice in the field of clinical child psychology.



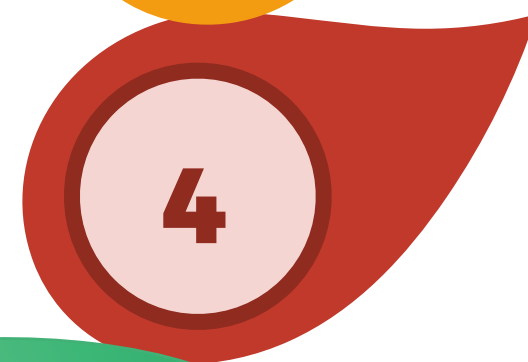
Welcome and introduction



What is PFA for children?



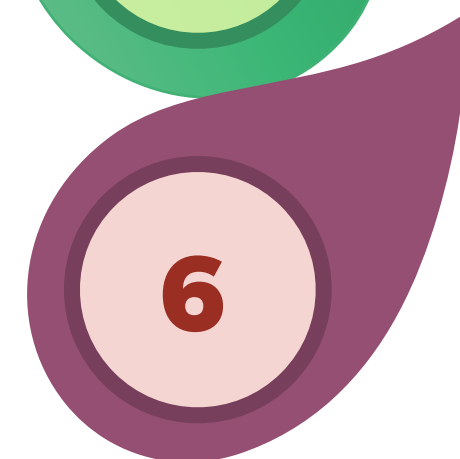
Children's reactions to crisis



Identifying children who need PFA,
and PFA action principles



PFA techniques – communicating
with children in distress



Wrap-up



What is PFA for children?

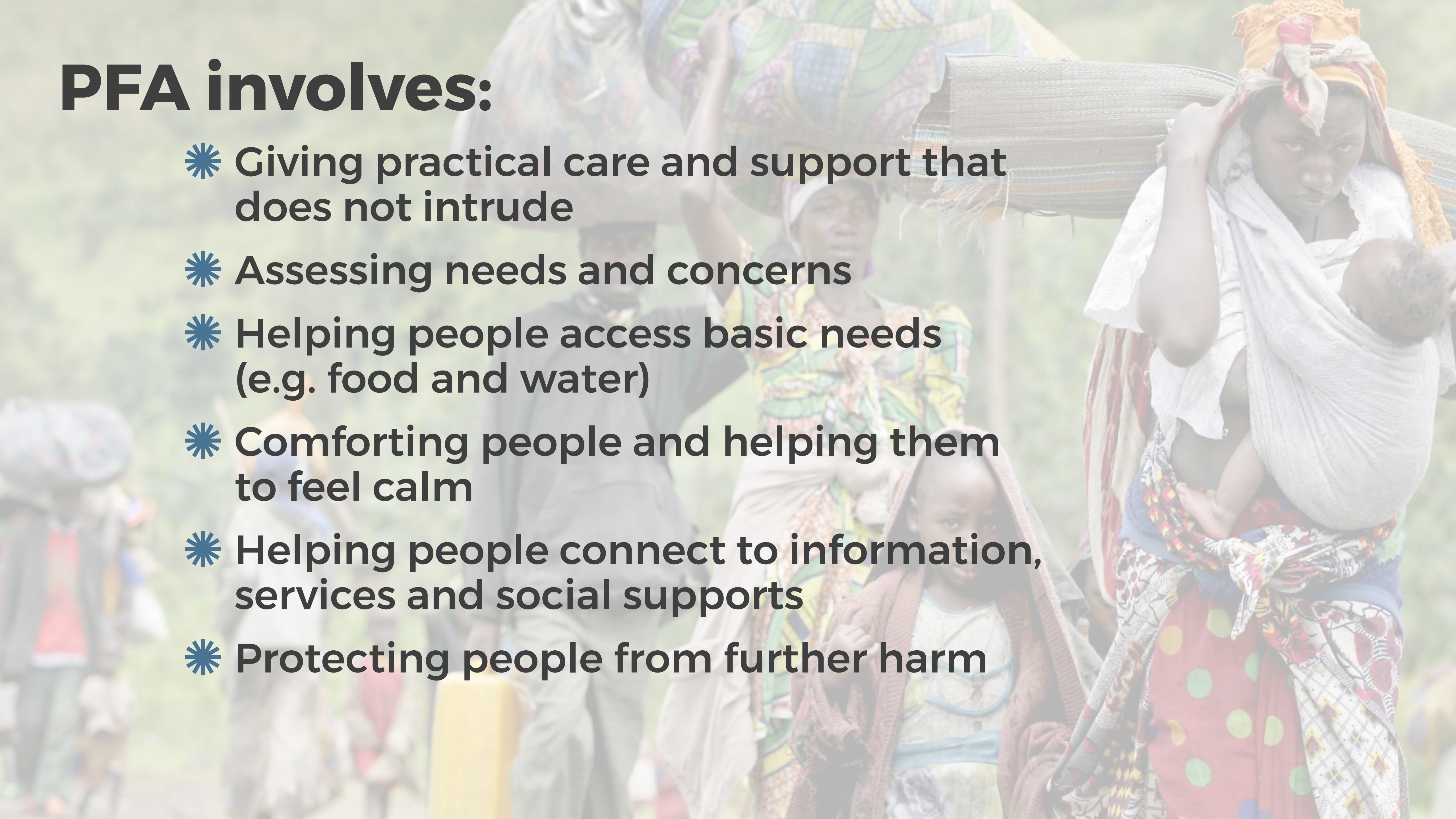
Psychological First Aid (PFA) is:

A description of a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support.

From WHO, War Trauma Foundation and World Vision International (2011), based on Sphere (2011) & IASC MHPSS Guidelines (2007)

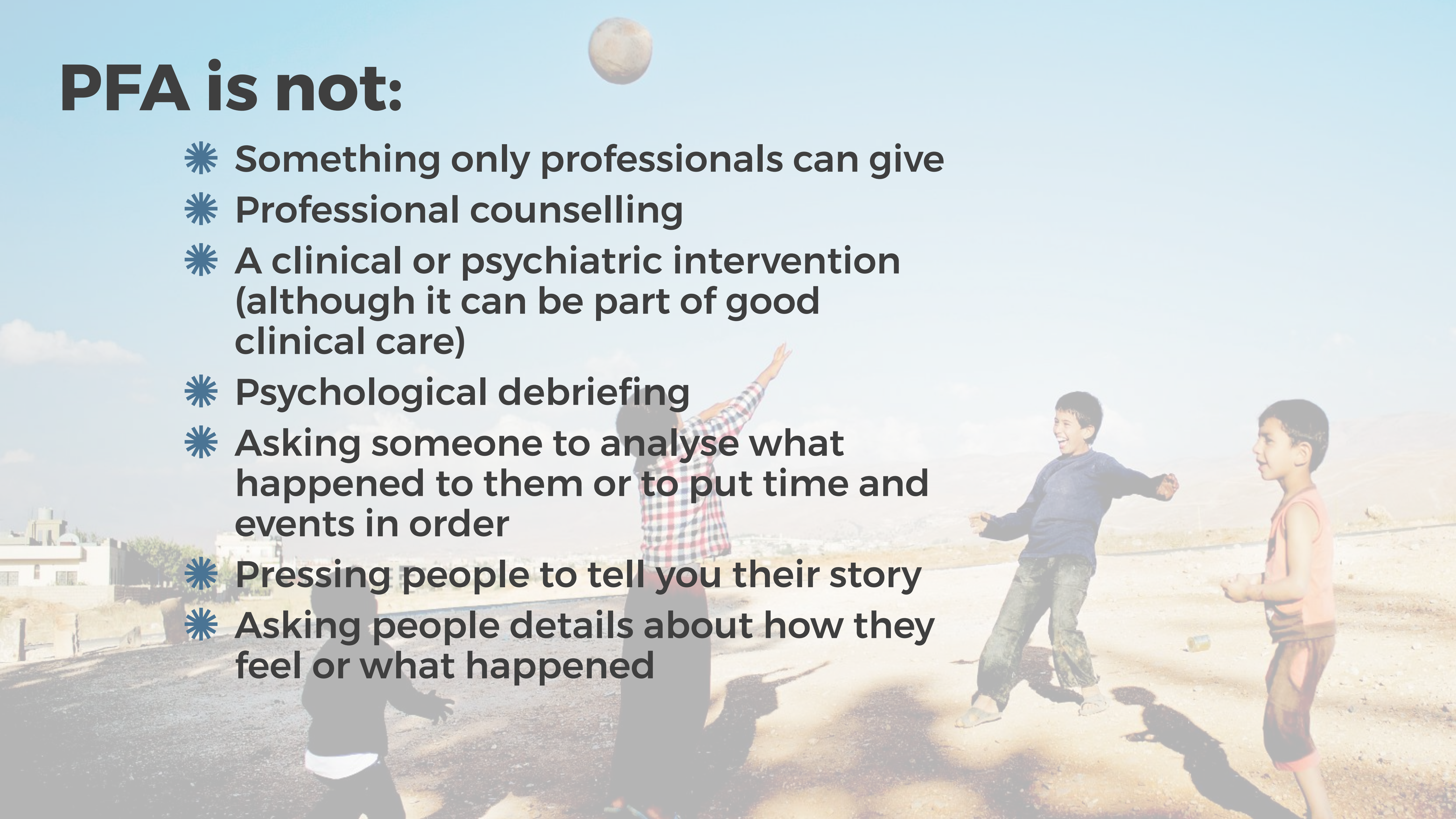
PFA involves:

- ✱ Giving practical care and support that does not intrude
- ✱ Assessing needs and concerns
- ✱ Helping people access basic needs (e.g. food and water)
- ✱ Comforting people and helping them to feel calm
- ✱ Helping people connect to information, services and social supports
- ✱ Protecting people from further harm



PFA is not:

- ✱ Something only professionals can give
- ✱ Professional counselling
- ✱ A clinical or psychiatric intervention (although it can be part of good clinical care)
- ✱ Psychological debriefing
- ✱ Asking someone to analyse what happened to them or to put time and events in order
- ✱ Pressing people to tell you their story
- ✱ Asking people details about how they feel or what happened



When do we provide PFA

- ✱ During an emergency situation or immediately after a crisis event ...
- ✱ ... as part of capacity building in disaster preparedness in emergency prone areas
- ✱ ... during or after a crisis affecting a small group of children
- ✱ ... as an immediate intervention with children who have been sexually or physically abused or neglected

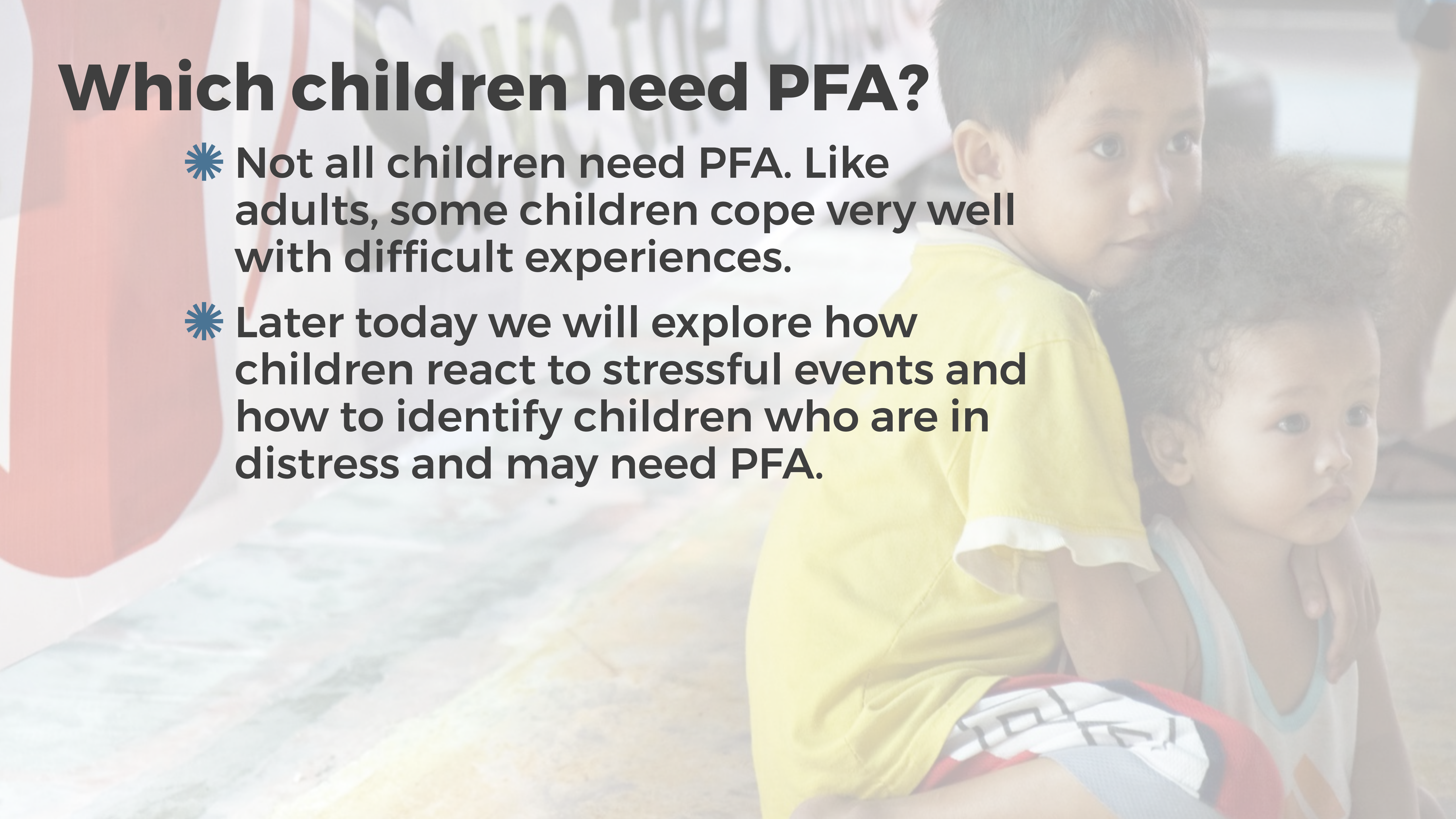
In crisis events children:

- ✱ React and think differently to adults
- ✱ Have specific needs depending on their age and stage
- ✱ Are vulnerable to adverse effects due to their physical size and social and emotional attachments to caregivers



Which children need PFA?

- ✱ Not all children need PFA. Like adults, some children cope very well with difficult experiences.
- ✱ Later today we will explore how children react to stressful events and how to identify children who are in distress and may need PFA.



Action principles for PFA for children



Adapted from WHO 'Psychological First Aid: Guide for field workers'

Most children recover well if they...

- ✱ Are reunited with their parents or caregivers
- ✱ Have their basic needs met
- ✱ Feel safe and out of danger
- ✱ Receive support like psychological first aid for children



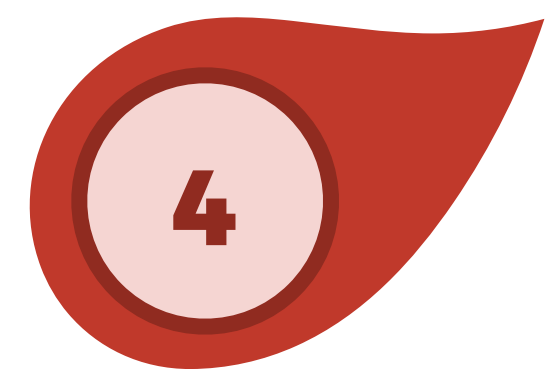
Children who may need extra help...

- ✱ Remain very distressed
- ✱ Maintain dramatic changes in personality and behavior
- ✱ Cannot function daily in their lives
- ✱ Feel threatened
- ✱ Are at risk of doing harm to themselves or others

If a child is severely distressed, avoid leaving him or her alone. Stay with the child until the reaction has passed or until you can get help from others.



Children's reactions to crisis



Identifying children who need PFA, and PFA action principles

Children at high risk of strong reactions are children who

- ✱ Are separated from their family or caregivers
- ✱ Have watched loved ones or others being hurt or killed
- ✱ Have been physically hurt
- ✱ Feel threatened
- ✱ Are worried and concerned because their parents or caregivers are grieving or concerned too
- ✱ Feel guilty about surviving when others died



Children with obvious signs of distress...

- ✱ Have physical symptoms of not feeling well, such as shaking, headaches, loss of appetite, aches and pains
- ✱ Cry a lot
- ✱ Are agitated and panicking
- ✱ Are aggressive and try to hurt others (hit, kick, bite, etc.)
- ✱ Cling continuously to their caregivers
- ✱ Seem confused or disorientated
- ✱ Appear withdrawn or very quiet with little or no movements
- ✱ Hide or shy away from other people
- ✱ Do not respond to others, do not speak at all
- ✱ Are very scared





?

Culturally specific behavior



?

What are the obvious signs of distress in parents and caregivers?



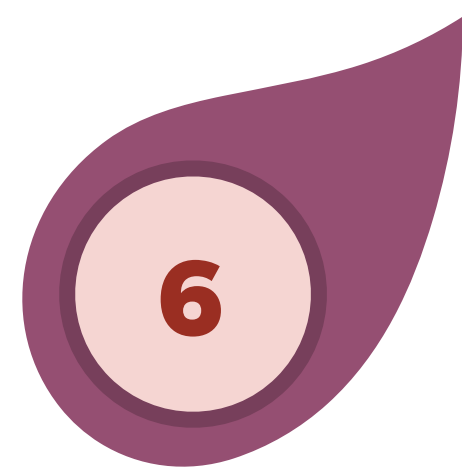
PFA techniques Communicating with children in distress

See <https://bit.ly/2HmZmfK>

Techniques

- ✱ Introduce yourself
- ✱ Get necessary information
- ✱ Active listening
- ✱ Normalization
- ✱ Generalization
- ✱ Stabilization
- ✱ Triangulation





Wrap-up

Thank You



Save the Children