

## Psychological First Aid Training for Emergencies | *Michelle Morales-Hamilton\**

Across Oregon, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Behavioral Health Division's Emergency Behavioral Health Response and Recovery (EMBHRR) team has been working closely with communities to provide Psychological First Aid (PFA) trainings that help ensure behavioral health needs are prioritized during emergency response. These partnerships recognize that recovery isn't just about restoring infrastructure — it's about supporting people. After a crisis, many people experience poor concentration, disrupted sleep, irritability, or feelings of disconnection. These reactions are common, and PFA equips responders and community members to offer a calm, steady presence that helps survivors feel grounded and safe.

Simple, practical strategies like slow breathing, grounding exercises, and sensory check-ins can reduce the body's stress response. Encouraging survivors to reestablish small routines or connect with friends and neighbors can support stability. Above all, it's important to remind survivors that healing is possible. It's equally important to seek help when needed. We also encourage survivors to seek support by calling, texting or chatting with the [988 Lifeline](#) where trained professionals can offer guidance at any time.

Most people recover naturally over time, especially when they feel supported by their community. Providing hope doesn't minimize what happened — it highlights human resilience and reinforces that no one has to navigate recovery alone. If you are part of a group or organization interested in PFA training, please contact [GroundedPFA@oha.oregon.gov](mailto:GroundedPFA@oha.oregon.gov). The training is free, and we look forward to providing it in your community.

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