



Considerations for Disaster Evacuation Flights From Heather Healy, Director AFA IEAP

Participation in disaster evacuation flights can be extremely rewarding. It can serve as a hands-on way of being part of a disaster relief effort. If you are considering volunteering for a disaster evacuation flight, or if you have been scheduled for this important work, please consider the following stress prevention and management tips:

Expect a Range of Emotions

Expect a range of emotions from those you are evacuating. In the wake of a disaster, feelings are far too strong and complex to be predictable and organized. Confusion, fear, agitation, grief, disbelief and anger are but a few of the expressions you may hear or see. If you are not familiar with the cultural nuances of how these feelings maybe expressed, you too may feel confused and uncertain about how to respond.

Bridge the Emotional and Cultural Divide with Your Interpersonal Skills.

Human connections are a main ingredient of the recovery process. Your calming presence and expressions of genuine concern will offer a safe and respectful atmosphere that supports anyone whose life has just been shattered by disaster.

Be Especially Team-thinking

Your flying partners are your most immediate source of support and assistance. A briefing before the flight that includes brainstorming concerns and needs, and creating a buddy system to monitor each other's stress reactions, may prove especially helpful and supportive.

Be *Intentional* in Your Own Self-Care

Exposure to those who have been traumatized can be especially impactful. Self-care activities are more important than ever. Before and after your flights, be mindful of engaging in activities that have proven to be healthy and healing to you in the past, whether it be exercising, praying, talking to others or just sticking to routines that make you feel balanced and grounded. Remember, the AFA EAP is also available to you for peer support and assistance. You can find your local EAP Committee Representatives at www.nwaafa.org, www.afanet.org or through the AFA EAP Helpline at 800-424-2406.