

When A Crisis Happens, Remember A-B-C

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On Sunday, September 16, 2012, District 8 held their regularly scheduled meeting at Joseph A. Schumacher Post 1597 in Croydon, PA. Everything was proceeding as planned until we came to that portion of the Ritual when District Commander Dennis Bicking asked, *“Is there a comrade or the family of a comrade in distress?”* The first person to respond was Thomas Goodman, Jr., Commander of the Croydon Post. A shock went through the group as Tom proceeded to inform those present that his Sr. Vice Commander, Jason Epp, a 23- year- old Navy veteran, had been killed in a motorcycle accident just a few hours earlier on Saturday evening.

Two days earlier, word was received that Bradley M. Fox, a member of VFW Post 6493 in Warminster, PA, and a five-year veteran Police Officer, was tragically killed in the line of duty on the eve of his 35th birthday. Brad, had been a staff sergeant in the U.S. Marine Corps for 10 years, and completed two tours, 2003 in Iraq and 2005 to 2006 in Fallujah. How should a Post Chaplain, the Post Commander, those in leadership positions, or anyone, respond when an unpredictable crisis, such as the ones described above, sends a shock wave through a Post family?

If each of us would remember and follow a simple procedure known as “The A-B-C Method of Responding to a Crisis,” it will guide us in knowing how to appropriately respond the next time a crisis occurs.

When a crisis happens, remember A-B-C. This simple phrase and three letter acrostic will help us remember to do the following three things.

A. Achieve Contact

First, achieve contact with the person or the person’s family. No matter where you are, your first response upon learning that a crisis occurred is to make contact with the immediate family. This can be achieved with a simple short phone call. We should not wait until the family contacts us. We should call them. In time, a personal visit may be in order.

Remember, you are not calling to get a blow-by-blow description of what happened or to offer solutions. You are initiating contact because you desire to communicate that you are really concerned and truly care.

B. Boil down the situation

Having achieved contact, the next step is to boil down the situation. Carefully observe all the dynamics that are taking place. Listen carefully and try to grasp who is involved and what is needed or will be needed in the next twenty-four to fortyeight hours.

C. Cope Actively

Third, be available to those involved, and be ready to assist them as they seek to cope actively with their difficult, and many times very painful, situation.

Following this A-B-C Method when a crisis happens should help you to respond appropriately to those whose world has been shattered. In the midst of helping, seek Divine assistance and always remember: "Respond to others as you would have them respond to you when you are hurting."

Blessings as you serve.

PS: I have placed a number of resources on my Chaplain's Page on the Department Website vfwpahq.org. If you encounter a situation and need guidance, don't hesitate to contact me. Hope to see you at the Mid-Winter Conference in Lancaster, PA January 31-February 2, 2013.

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