
May 2009 Newsletter

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Glad We Were There!



It was good to be with our IAF colleagues at the IAF North American Conference April 22-24, 2009. The plenary sessions, workshops and seminars were quite good. And we appreciated all the interest and visitors to our GFSC booth. See you next year in Chicago!



GFSC and **Us Partners** are excited to present and facilitate a series of 4 webinars (our first) on **Transition: Crisis 2 Resilience**. This series of 1 hour-long webinars will focus on how a crisis does not have to become an disaster.

Co-facilitated by **Hina Pendle**, PhD. of Us Partners and **Marieann Shovlin** of GFSC, this series is designed for facilitators, consultants, business & community leaders, emergency response professionals and citizens.

What participants will gain:

- Recognize the characteristics and objectives of each stage of recovery
- Identify the psychological, social and behavioral profiles of people at each stage
- Learn effective interventions and strategies appropriate at each stage
- Avoid unintended consequences and shift away from ineffective strategies
- Identify factors that signal when it is time to move on

The series is scheduled for June 2, 9, 16, 23, 2009, 4-5 p.m. Pacific time/7-8 p.m. EDT. Tuition for the series is \$110, including the Transform Crisis2Resilience handbook. For more information and to register, please visit www.crisis2resilience.com.

Facilitators Helping Communities Recover

In response to most recent bush-fires in Australia, **Facilitators Helping Communities Recover** was established by Vv McWaters, Anne Pattiillo and Nicole Hunter to link committed people within Australia and across the globe...a virtual community. Currently more than 100 members are engaged in networking, planning, learning and sharing actions and idea with one another.

Some of their latest endeavors:

More than 50 volunteers have registered for the community engagement workshop at Maryville. Networks contacted include:

- Facilitators Helping Communities Recover
- Groupwork Australia
- Leadership Victoria
- Volunteering Australia
- Gould Group
- Red Cross
- Australasian Facilitators Network

The immediate response is gratifying!



When to Get Involved: Role of Facilitators After a Crisis

For podcasts and discussions about the aftermath of the bush fires in Victoria, Australia, [click here](#). Then look for



Download and Listen to Podcast

with Gil Brenson Lazan, Viv McWaters, Geoff Brown discussing history and role of facilitators in helping people and communities rebound after crises. How to involve survivors in working through the (normal, natural, necessary) grieving process and bringing individuals together to build community resilience and self-reliance as they plan their own future...



Shift Happens: When Crisis is Everywhere, How do We Prepare?

By Hina Pendle, Us Partners

Crisis is everywhere. We recognize it more easily when it is an earthquake, a hurricane or flood. But, now we're all in a tsunami of economic meltdown, collapsing infrastructure and basic systems failure—in communities, organizations,

government agencies and the environment. Because our society is so complex, we can't predict precisely what challenges will unfold as systems breakdown. The level of stress and fear is accelerating. Organizations are reducing their workforce and production. Communities are cutting services. People are losing their homes. These are not solutions. They are just immediate reactions, which trigger further unintended consequences. How

do we prepare when life as we know it is shifting like sand?

While there is no way to be fully prepared for an unknown future, we can greatly increase our capability to respond to crises more skillfully, effectively and elegantly. When we know the nature of crisis we can predict what to expect and when, ways to intervene, and how to transition from basic survival to building resilient, self-reliant systems.

Understanding the four stage process from crisis to resilience will equip leaders to facilitate the dynamic changes their organizations and communities need for repairing and preparing for the future.

Humanity is in the midst of a global transformation. Change is inevitable. The old organizational systems, old ways of thinking and the stability they promised are destabilized and dysfunctional. Many are ill-equipped to weather the crisis let alone re-imagine a different and better future. As in any crisis, people are likely to be anxious, confused or reactive. Thinking isn't rational or strategic. It is focused on

Collaboration and Healing: *To build a strong alliance of facilitators working collaboratively to help ease the pain and help with progress in fire affected communities; also learning more about how to make on-line groups work for people - particularly from afar.*

Nicole Hunter

survival and coping in the moment. High stress levels can be paralyzing, not conducive to clear thinking or effective action. To transform the situation, a different approach is needed to set a new more resilient course. Opportunities for breakthrough, if taken, lead people to adapt, move forward and create a common, unifying vision.

Breakdown to Breakthrough

I recently heard that Darwin's "survival of the fittest" was misinterpreted. He actually said that those with the "most adaptive" skills have the best chance of survival. What a valuable message for our time of uncertainty. We can better survive and adapt to the challenges of change by utilizing the four stages recovery process model. Each stage has distinctive social and psychological characteristics, needs and leadership strategies. Using the best strategy at the right stage could prevent a crisis from becoming a disaster.



How do leaders lead effectively through crisis? Appropriate leadership style and strategies at the appropriate stages are key. President Obama came into office during multidimensional crises—economy, wars, government system breakdown. People looked to him for strong effective leadership, seeking clear direction, stability, and self-confidence. He needed to quickly put together a team of competent experts. In the critical survival stage, people are frightened and feel helpless. They want a leader who can take charge. His leadership style needed to be directive in order to be effective. If he had been more advisory, letting government agencies find their own way or waiting until they sought his counsel, people would have felt rudderless, likely causing even more chaos and unanticipated, unintended consequences.

Hopefully, after securing a solid level of stability, experts and citizens will proactively resolve issues locally. At that

point a highly directive leadership strategy could disempower the community and sabotage all their gains. Transitioning from one stage of recovery to the next, with appropriate leadership strategies is critical to success. Informed leaders can facilitate the transformation of crisis through the stages of growth to a whole and healthy community and society.

The Global Facilitators Service Corps and Us Partners are teaming up to expand the corps of knowledgeable leaders worldwide, who can help communities, organizations, businesses, and citizens emerge from crisis, becoming more self-reliant and resilient. We are offering series of 4 weekly one-hour webinars accessible by computer or telephone, beginning June 2, 2009. Please join us. Our time to make a positive impact is now. These skills will make a critical, positive difference in improving our lives, our communities and our world.



How Facilitators Can Help Now

By Viv McWaters

Bushfires, emergency response, media coverage, tears, volunteers, support, recovery, resettling, hugs, rebuilding. Then what? How do individuals and communities rebuild the bonds that make communities, well, communities?

Everyone is traumatised by a disaster – the survivors, the helpers, the professionals, the bureaucrats, the media. So who can work with, and in, communities to help with the long-term social reconnection? And why does it matter? Surely rebuilding infrastructure and getting homes and services operating is a greater priority?

I used to think that it was best that someone with my facilitation skills should stay out of the way and let the trained recovery people get on with it, to let the rebuilding begin. Then I learned that social reconstruction and building resilience is important too – and the sooner it begins the better.

Social reconstruction is about connection, rebuilding the bonds amongst

individuals and groups in a community. Strengthening these bonds helps avoid secondary crises, where individuals become disconnected or isolated and choose to cope by making ineffective, often dangerous, choices, (e.g., using drugs, alcohol, violence or withdrawing altogether).

Facilitators don't have to wait: They can contribute right now, building the foundations for faster and more effective, recovery. A skilled facilitator can create a safe and caring environment to help people express their emotions and encourage connection through sharing of stories and experiences. A skilled facilitator can help create an awareness of what is possible; helping people recall their strengths and build new competencies as they and their community's progress through the stages of recovery. And a skilled facilitator can be available when individuals and groups are ready to move forward, re-creating a new community based on the achievements of the past and the hopes for the future.

When to Talk & When to Listen: Facilitators, can help a community build rapport, creating a trusting environment where individuals can share their experiences. We know when to talk and when to shut up. We know how to listen so that others will want to talk, and how to guide when people are ready to listen.

Reframe Perceptions: Facilitators ask questions that enable people to reframe their perceptions, and the stories they carry about themselves. This helps develop personal, group and community potential. We gently help people reframe language that limits their options into statements that are more effective, empowering and positive.

Social and Group Resilience: Dr. Gilbert Brenson-Lazan, an experienced authority on the role of facilitators in disaster response, describes social and group resilience as "the ability to face internal or external crisis and not only effectively resolve it but also learn from it, be strengthened by it and emerge

transformed by it, both individually and as a group."

Rebound and Rebuild: What is the best we hope will emerge from a community struck by disaster? Rebuilding those bonds that define a community depends on the community's ability to rebound as well as rebuild. This social and group resilience is an essential outcome. Groups or communities that have experienced a disaster, have the knowledge, skills and resources needed for developing this resilience, but might not have the (facilitation) skills to recognise and hone the qualities and strategies to rebuild their communities.

GFSC provides mentoring, methods and materials for communities to strengthen their resilience in times of crisis and change.

Develop Leadership in

Groups: Working with groups stimulates and reinforces positive community characteristics, and also enhances and rebuilds personal identity, reinforcing self-esteem and self-confidence. Facilitators can be appropriately directive, consultative, collaborative and empowering all at the same time. Our job is not to lead but to develop leadership in the

group.

Minimize Escalation of Conflict: When people are thrown together as a result of a disaster, some conflict is inevitable, often driven by fear, guilt or personal need. Facilitators can help minimize conflict escalation (different from avoiding conflict altogether which would be unhelpful) through dialogue and exploring flexibility and options.

Caring for Ourselves and Others: Finally, skilled facilitators know how to recognise stress in others because we know how to care for ourselves. We know our personal limits. We know we all have personal limits. We know how to practice active grieving and how to develop a strong support network.

Develop Group Capacity: A facilitated group develops its own capacity to support itself. This type of help is very effective for minimizing (individual) dependence. The group develops strategies together, helps individuals

define their own roles and the community can move forward together.

Facilitators bring an understanding of the innate power of groups, the importance of participation and the belief that groups have within themselves the resources they need for survival, recovery and growth. As communities affected by the bushfires navigate their way into their new futures, facilitators can help them form new structures for emotional and practical support.



Crisis > Change > Choice: Building Community Resilience

At some point(s) in time, everyone is affected by major changes, often of crisis proportions. After initial reactions, people will begin to recover, in identifiable stages. Often, if unaware or without leadership, guidance or local resources, people can be stuck at a stage and/or making poor choices, if they even recognize that they have choices.

The GFSC model, Crisis > Change > Choice describes the stages, social climate, behaviors and leadership strategies of building personal and community resilience and self-reliance. For a brief summary of this model, [Crisis > Change > Choice: Building Community Resilience](#) and other helpful materials, please visit the GFSC Online Library.



CHANGE MANAGEMENT TOOLBOOK
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Help Change Unfold Social and Technological Development for Better Organizations and A Better World

May 9, 2009, 14.00-17.00 GMT

For more information and to register for this **free** event:

<http://www.change-management-toolbook.com/course/view.php?id=115>

Additions to GFSC Online Library

Thank you to Izzy Gesell for adding

[Talk Yourself Out of It: Changing Negative Self-Talk to Positive Self-Talk.](#)

Izzy's programs help people thrive and prosper during changing, difficult times, helping people become more confident, positive, spontaneous and effective.

We are fortunate that Izzy will be presenting and facilitating our September 15th webinar on this topic. Stay tuned for more details.

And thank you to Andrew Gaines for adding

[Facilitating for Ideas and Visioning](#)

a brief description of effective ways to encourage and manage a group effort to brainstorm fresh ideas.



Gratitude/Gracias

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GFSC Advisory Council for their patience, expertise, advice and caring.

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