## Survivor Narrative: Surviving Disaster and Critical Incidents

**Description:** By this point in the class, you will have learned about disasters that have affected communities around the world. This assignment presents an opportunity to learn more about the experiences of Survivors and to consider what variables may have impacted that experience.

**Note:** *This should* ***not*** *be a narrative of your personal experience with a disaster, though you may refer to your own experience very briefly in the context of the paper if it illuminates the narrative you are sharing in a substantial way*

## Steps to completing the assignment:

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| **Step one** | Decide on a particular disaster event (through research, experience, or something you’ve heard about in class or through the media). This event cannot have taken place more than 20 years ago. |
| **Step two** | Gain some understanding (through some nominal research) about this precise event. You might delve a little further into how events like this one impact people more generally (e.g. is it an Earthquake? A Tsunami? A terrorist incident? A plane crash?). Each type of event can have different consequences. Keep in mind that every event is unique and every individual experience is unique, though some patterns do exist when looked at the population-level. |
| **Step three** | **Utilize web and scholarly research** to identify articles, videos, radio broadcasts, interviews, etc. to learn about the event and hear survivor stories. Spend at least 3 hours viewing, taking notes, and gathering information. **You should not be relying only on print text.** You may not use Amanda Ripley’s book The Unthinkable as a source. |
| **Step four** | Think about the story the survivor is telling and drawing from lectures on *Common Reactions to Trauma* and the two chapters in your textbook devoted to the subject, **try to identify the expressed needs and/or outcomes of individual stories**. You may zero in on one or two stories, as it might not be easy to find survivor stories or interviews. But you need to listen to or watch at least one. Take notes. **1)** What makes those experiences & reactions generalizable (as commonly seen reactions), and **2)** and also unique (based on that person’s own history, risk factors, or whatever you can actually glean from the story). Try not to project your own fears or your own experiences onto that of the survivor. In fact, aside from minor reflective comments, try to keep all your focus on the understanding of the survivor experience for that event. |
| **Step five** | Look through your notes and/or listen to the story again. Take note of **emergent themes** that are raised in the conversation, i.e., the emotional reactions given the nature of the event (positive? negative?); coping styles or strategies; emotional changes over time; access to resources; financial burdens; bereavement or loss; etc. and take note of how and when these themes come up. **Use these themes to provide structure to the Discussion portion of your paper.** *What can you bring to this situation and analysis? What have you learned so far in the course to inform your view of this individual’s narrative?* |

## Structure of the Paper:

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| **Introduction** | Introduce your paper: the disaster you are writing about, the survivor story you are going to tell, and the overarching lessons learned that you want to introduce |
| **Background** | Brieflydescribe the event (or kind of event) and its typical impacts on the quality of life (including emotional state) of individuals and/or communities. Do not let this section dominate your paper. |
| **Methodology** | Simply state what methods you undertook to further understand the event, and how & where you found specific Survivor stories. Where did you get your research material? What key words did you use, etc. |
| **Discussion** | This is the meat of your paper and your opportunity to shine. Provide your interpretation of the survivor’s story. It is okay to include direct quotes from the individual as long as you introduce them. It is also appropriate to include body language or tone of voice. Be selective with your material by only including information that best illustrates this person’s experience. **Indicate any themes you identified**. Compare these to Common Reactions and **make some linkages between** some of the things we have covered in class or was covered in your reading. Make an attempt to explain and distill the survivor’s experience and reactions. |
| **Conclusions** | This is your grand finale. Conclude with what you have discovered about the impact of this kind of event on a single individual, but also what makes this person’s reaction unique to them. What key points can we learn from this person’s story? |

## Important Notes:

**Writing Style:** Remember to keep your writing clear and concise. Eliminate anything that is superfluous to the story you are focusing on. PLEASE seek out assistance or proofreading help if you don’t think your grammar or writing is strong.   
  
**Format:** This paper must be written in Times New Roman, 12 point font, *single spaced*, & 2-3 pages, not including any references you might have.   
  
**References:** Include each and every reference you used, including YouTube videos and media clips. Be sure to include a minimum of 5 references and sources. Use APA Style to write references. (See APA Style Guide).