

## Emergencies: Basic information

In most cases, an emergency that has occurred is quickly and easily recognised as such. It is always a special challenge to find a remedy. However, in order to be able to intervene effectively and helpfully in emergencies, appropriate knowledge and certain physical skills are necessary in any case.

The more types of emergencies a person is prepared for, the better it is both for him and for his social environment. Admittedly, we will have to accept that such preparation has limits and that individuals cannot acquire knowledge and skills for all possible cases to the same extent. Also, different emergencies carry different weight. If someone says to his neighbour, "If you run out of cigarettes at the weekend, just come over to my place; I always have at least one carton in stock," then such a thing may be help in an emergency for the smoker; but from our point of view, in this case there is more of an emergency in that the inquirer is so attached to smoking that a short shortage of cigarettes is perceived as an emergency by the person concerned. On the other hand, he may not perceive his attachment to smoking as a continuing emergency.

This already brings us to the classification of emergencies and emergency situations; furthermore, both can be classified either under "subjective feeling" or "objective facts". This can already pose questions to a rescuer, the answers to which are important for his or her behaviour. With what and how can he provide optimal help without being plagued with doubts and self-reproaches afterwards?

A psychology professor who was drafted into the Wehrmacht during the Second World War told us about a war experience: He was the commander of a group of soldiers. During a combat incident, he instructed two soldiers to take cover behind a small chapel. They did so, but then a shell hit this small structure and the two soldiers were killed. Something like that causes severe psychological stress. Another example: a colleague told me about a war expe-

rience of his grandfather: he suddenly came face to face with a Russian soldier in the field. Who would be the first to grab a gun and shoot? They stood there for a while, then the Russian reached under his jacket and the enemy fired, hitting fatally. He went over to the fallen Russian soldier to see what he was going to pull out: it was a photo of his family. Even after many years, the grandfather could only reproduce it in tears.

If one has behaved differently in an emergency than one would have liked afterwards, and as a result others have come to serious harm, an emergency is thereby burned into the soul. This should be mentioned briefly to highlight the seriousness of emergency aid. Putting a shell around one's soul so that nothing can hit it is not a solution — even if professional helpers are instructed to keep an emotional professional distance from those they are professionally obliged to help.

This is not about professional helpers, but about every person who can, as far as possible, firstly help themselves and secondly also help others physically and psychologically in acute or chronic problem situations.

What is the best way to approach this matter? In our opinion, it makes sense to first list various types of emergencies and emergency situations more or less taxonomically and according to frequency of occurrence, so that advice can be found as quickly as possible in a particular emergency — as far as one has not already internalised everything. It is strongly recommended that the contents of this topic be acquired to such an extent that one can mentally fall back on them in any situation and can put the respective knowledge into practice. Furthermore, if possible, practical exercises should be carried out, which should be repeated from time to time. For some of these, groups should be formed to go through them together.

As far as group formation is concerned, suggestions are offered in the area of „self-sufficiency“, whereby practice groups can be integrated to help in emergencies. The importance of symbiotic groups is carefully highlighted and described in detail. The need for this is expected to increase as the usual institutions for emergency help become less and less available due to overload,

funding problems and lack of staff. Even a collapse of institutionalised aid in case of accident, illness, need for goods, etc. cannot be ruled out. The subsidiarity principle will be the only sensible way out there too. Therefore, it is the need of the hour to increase and build up aid capacities starting from the smallest unit — the individual. We have to start there and continue with the next larger unit, a group of three to ten primary units. There is no point in waiting for others to do what we could or already can do ourselves. It makes sense, on the other hand, to start expanding your skills yourself. So you can say to yourself, "I'm going to change something now, because only if I change something in myself can something change in my surroundings." That then grows, that spreads, that changes the world. Is that fantasy? No, because you can see the change in yourself, and your environment sees it in you.

Look around among your friends — you will most likely find at least two or three who will join in and do the same as you. It is fantasy to expect help from the state or from institutions for which the individual is only a faceless component of a mass. As the owner of goods and money, they are good enough to take away as much as they can, and if they have nothing that can be taken away from them, those secretly wish for the "useless eater without a face who only pollutes the environment" to leave as soon as possible. This is the sober truth behind a beautifully painted façade. Only those people who are emotionally attached to you are not indifferent to you, and to those who derive benefit for themselves from your well-being. From the individual to his closest friends and from them onwards in this sense — this is the direction in which it must go. The opposite direction does not really work, because in it you are only robot-like, machine-like. It is not people-oriented, which of course does not mean that within those institutions, emotional components cannot make themselves felt individually at lower levels through personal encounters.

The right way to help must be relatively holistic. We cannot grasp the human being in an absolutely holistic way and therefore we cannot meet him in a completely holistic way. Respect for the neighbour is rooted in the fact that by being human he eludes any of my attempts to define him, i. e. to limit him

in what he is. He thus rather shows me my own limitation in the ability to understand him as what he truly is. The question about it remains eternally unanswered for me. In this inaccessibility of the mystery of the indivisibility of human beings consists what we call human dignity. Where this is no longer perceived, only oppression and tyranny prevail.

We are fully convinced that the path we have outlined here is the only one that deserves to be called prosocial and also the only one that can indisputably claim to be humane. Last but not least, it is as stable as no other can be. It is therefore very worthwhile to rethink.

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