The 10 Stages of Acute Traumatic Stress Management (ATSM):
A Brief Summary

Reprinted from Comprehensive Acute Traumatic Stress Management™
by Mark D. Lerner, Ph.D. and Raymond D. Shelton, Ph.D.
© The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, Inc.

1. Assess for Danger/Safety for Self and Others
   • Are there factors that can compromise your safety or the safety of others?

2. Consider the Mechanism of Injury
   • How did the event physically and perceptually impact upon the individual?

3. Evaluate the Level of Responsiveness
   • Is individual alert and responsive? Under the influence of a substance?

4. Address Medical Needs
   • For those who are specifically trained to manage acute medical conditions

5. Observe & Identify
   • Who has been exposed to the event and who is evidencing signs of traumatic stress?

6. Connect with the Individual
   • Introduce yourself, state your title and/or position. Once he is medically evaluated, move the individual away from the stressor. Begin to develop rapport.

7. Ground the Individual
   • Discuss the facts, assure safety if he is, have him “Tell his story.” Discuss behavioral and physiological responses.

8. Provide Support
   • Be empathic. Communicate a desire to understand the feelings that lie behind his words.

9. Normalize the Response
   • Normalize, validate and educate.... “Normal person trying to cope with an abnormal event.”

10. Prepare for the Future
    • Review the event, bring the person to the present, describe events in the future and provide referrals.