



Self-Care for First Responders (and the rest of us)

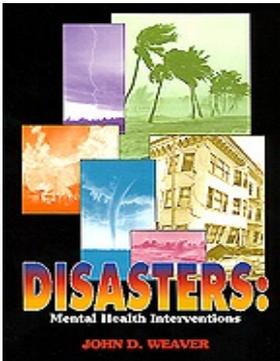
**John
N3PFA**

American Red Cross

Introduction

John D. Weaver, LCSW

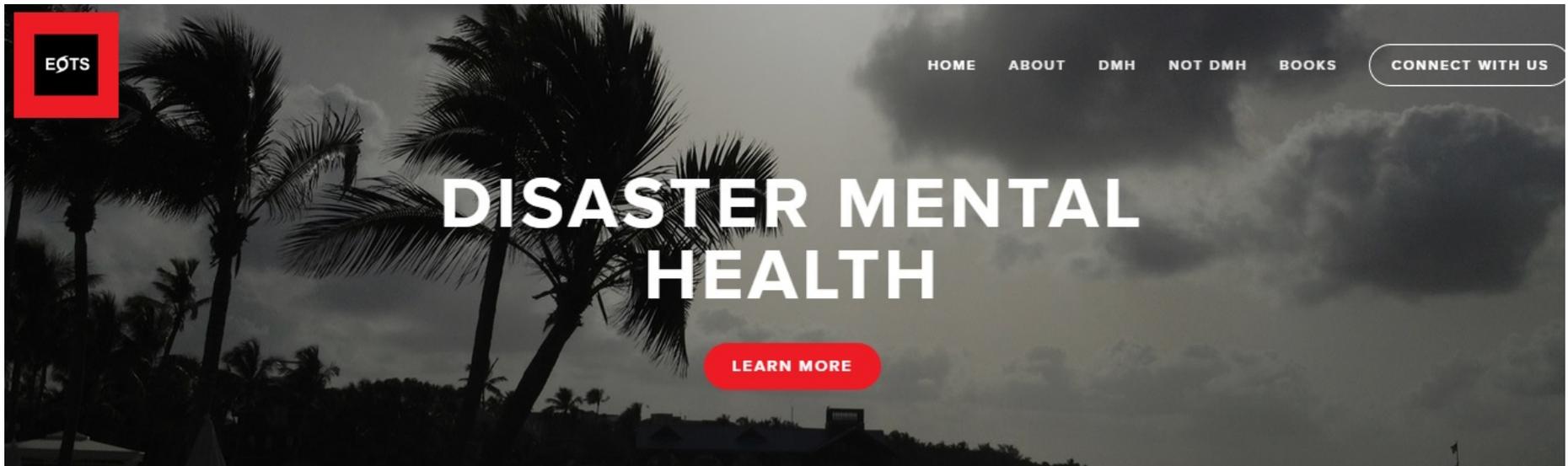
- Founding partner - EYE OF THE STORM, Inc.
- Former Casework Supervisor and DCORT Coordinator for Northampton County Mental Health
- Author of several articles, chapters, and books including *Disasters: Mental Health Interventions* (1995, Professional Resource Press)
- American Red Cross DMH Volunteer since 1992 including service at the 1994 USAir crash in Pittsburgh, the 1996 ValuJet crash in the Everglades, the 2001 crash of United Flight 93 in Shanksville, and the World Trade Center relief operation in NY
- Amateur (ham) radio operator - call sign N3PFA
- Friendly on *Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram*

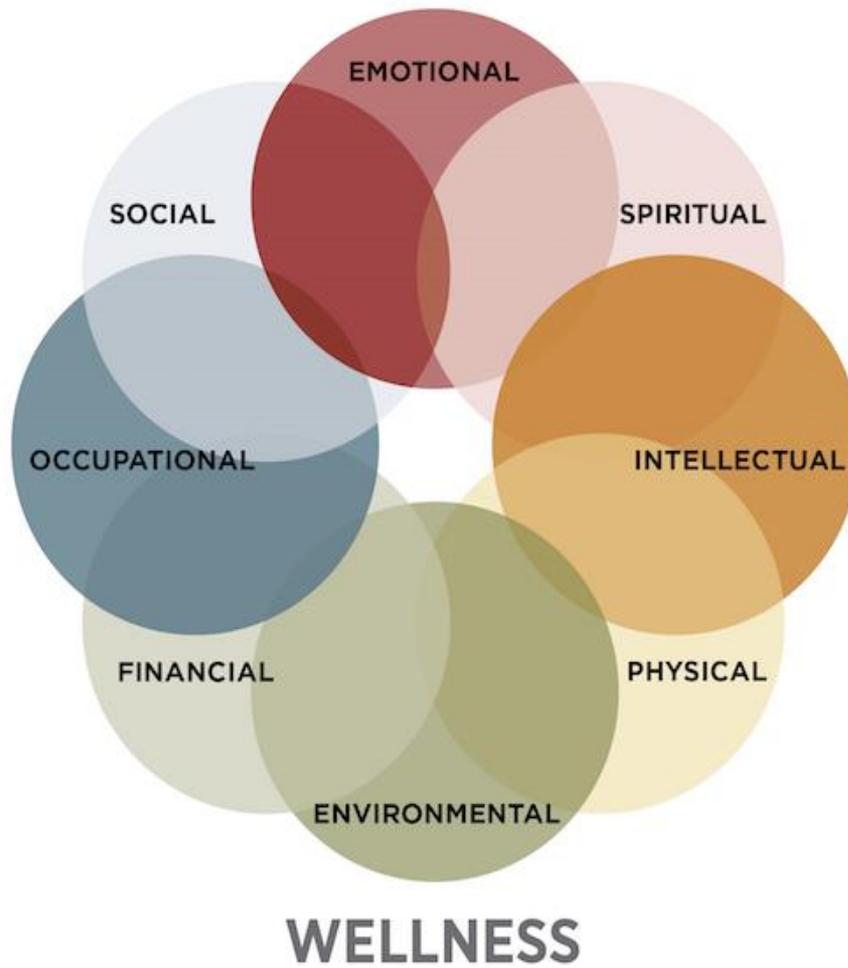


To download a pdf version of this presentation please visit:

eyeofthestorminc.com

and click on the + at the bottom of the page
(just above the address)





The Eight Dimensions of Wellness:

- **Emotional** — Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships. Understanding your feelings and being able to express them.
- **Environmental** — Occupying pleasant, safe, stimulating, and respectful environments that support well-being.
- **Financial** — Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.
- **Intellectual** — Practice being an intellectually-curious lifelong learner, recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities.

The Eight Dimensions of Wellness (cont.):

- **Occupational** — Personal satisfaction and enrichment from work (employment, pursuing education, and volunteering), doing things that you are passionate about.
- **Physical** — Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods, and sleep.
- **Social** — Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system.
- **Spiritual** — Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Being more mindful and more connected to the world around you (other people, nature, etc.). Explore personal values and beliefs.

SAMHSA

The Eight Dimensions of Wellness

<https://youtu.be/tDzOdRvLAfM>

Implications for recruiting, training, and retaining our paid and volunteer workforce? (upsides and downsides)

Emotional

Satisfaction of helping others (compassion satisfaction) and, in some cases, satisfaction from paying it forward (as happens with disaster survivors who want to give back).

Exposure to secondary traumatic stress is common especially for our disaster volunteers and staff.

Implications for recruiting, training, and retaining our paid and volunteer workforce?

Environmental

We strive to assure the safety and security of our workers and of the victims/survivors.

Our workplaces are often very high-stress (with too much noise, commotion, volume of work, perceived risk, and vicarious traumatization..

Implications for recruiting, training, and retaining our paid and volunteer workforce?

Financial

For many people, the compassion satisfaction we earn from our work is worth far more than money.

Many people need to work extra hours and/or two jobs to support their families, leaving less time to volunteer and/or less money to donate to support our work.

Implications for recruiting, training, and retaining our paid and volunteer workforce?

Intellectual

Constant exposure to new information and daily chances to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities fit nicely with the need “to use it or lose it” (mental fitness).

We are constantly turning over people, revising our policies, updating our processes, and even rewriting our vocabulary (and continuous change triggers distress).

Implications for recruiting, training, and retaining our paid and volunteer workforce?

Occupational

We believe in the Red Cross mission and we get to work for an organization that routinely does awesome things.

The demands of the job may be more than many can tolerate and, even for those who have the tolerance, juggling work life and personal life is often difficult.

Implications for recruiting, training, and retaining our paid and volunteer workforce?

Physical

For adventure seekers (adrenaline junkies), workaholics, retired military personnel and government workers (people who have survived an extended experience with a large bureaucratic organization), and folks who think sleep is overrated, we're a perfect match.

People who need stable routines and lots of sleep are easily frustrated and disillusioned by the pace, by things that seem more rigid than necessary, by turnover and constant, change, and whenever they do not feel valued.

Implications for recruiting, training, and retaining our paid and volunteer workforce?

Social

We form tight bonds and do so very quickly, especially in disaster services. This is ideal for peer support.

New people (especially shy, introverted people) sometimes see us as being cliquish and then they have a hard time getting connected and feeling welcome.

Implications for recruiting, training, and retaining our paid and volunteer workforce?

Spiritual

We get to connect with others and experience the diversity of our world, as we live out our values and beliefs working in concert and fellowship with many other great people.

We get to see the best and the worst in people. Sadly, the world is not a just place, it's just a place. That can be hard to accept, especially when bad things happen and we cannot do as much as we'd like to fix whatever has gone wrong.

What are some of the broader implications for all of us?

- Seek balance
- Accept change
- Pursue growth
- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Manage stress
- Practice self-care

***People are almost always
changed by the traumatic
events they face during their
lives....***

***....but they need not be
damaged by those events.***

John Weaver

4 Types of Stress

- **Anticipatory Stress** - Concerns over the future
 - “What if...?”
 - “Am I ready for this?”
 - “Here we go!”
- **Situational Stress** - The concerns of the moment (newness, uniqueness and magnitude)
- **Chronic Stress** - Worry over time
 - “I thought this would end sooner!”
 - “I miss my family.”
- **Residual Stress** - Unresolved issues from previous incidents

Physical Reactions to Stress

- High blood pressure
- Appetite disturbances
- Headaches
- Stomach aches
- Joint pain
- Bowel problems
- Stress-related illnesses
- Trouble sleeping

Psychological Reactions

- Irritable, anxious or depressed moods
- Helplessness
- Trouble concentrating
- Intellectualizing
- Loss of faith in human nature
- Paranoia
- More pessimistic
- Over generalizing
- Taking on problems of others
- Loss of empathy
- Increased focus on self

Social Reactions

- Isolation
- Defensiveness
- Tardiness /
Absenteeism
- Leaving the
scene of a
trauma
- Leaving the
profession
- Aggression
- Poor work
performance
- Theft

Behavioral Reactions

- Clingy
- Impatient
- Irritable
- Withdrawn
- Moody
- Regression
- Appetite changes
- Nightmares/Sleep disturbances
- Hypervigilance
- Losing things
- Accident proneness
- Self-harm behaviors
- Elevated startle response
- Overuse of negative coping (smoking, alcohol, drugs,...)

Modifiers of Stress

- **Exposure** – Ground zero and beyond
- **Duration** - Longer exposure to any stressful event usually makes it more severe
- **Multiplicity** - The more stressful events there are, the greater the potential reaction
- **Situational Importance** - Greater importance of the event means greater reaction

Modifiers of Stress (cont.)

- **Individual's Perception of the Stress** -
 - “How threatening is the situation?”
 - “How prepared am I to cope with the consequences?”
- **Reminders that Trigger Vivid Memories** -
Press coverage, trials, lawsuits, etc.
- **Stress Tolerance** - General ability to tolerate plus benefits of stress inoculation

Stressed Out Feelings =

- Helplessness
- Sadness
- Depression
- Hypersensitivity
- Emotional roller coaster
- Overwhelmed
- Depleted
- Powerlessness
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Anger/Rage
- Survivor guilt
- Shutdown
- Numbness
- Fear

Stress Triggers

Associations/Similarities to our lives

- Sights, sounds, smells, etc.
(someone with familiar features, habits, clothing, perfume, ...)
- Recent life events
- Personal sensitivities and fears (e.g., bugs, animals, heights, water, smoke, fire,...) that get our heart pounding

Stress Triggers (cont.)

Types and lengths of exposure

- Graphic nature of some events
- Longer events are more potentially damaging
- Repeated assaults / recurring events and constant crises (*Here we go again...*)
- Frequent reminders

We all have our own
“Psychological Achilles Heel”
and we all have our own “Tell”

- Learn what pushes your buttons & triggers your personal reactions to trauma (thoughts, reactions, and memories that are associated with various sights, sounds, smells, and traumatic life events).
- Learn your “tell” (e.g., eye twitch, neck pain, sore joint, upset stomach, bowel problems, tears, etc.) that indicates when you need to step back for a while.

Special Demands on Emergency / Disaster Responders

- We are forced to face the reality of some of the worst aspects of life (e.g., accidental deaths, natural and human caused disasters, etc.).
- We are made painfully aware of trauma potential in our own lives (and our own mortality).
- We are constantly reminded of our own trauma history (through the pain of others).

Who is At Greatest Risk?

- Newest among us
- Most caring / empathetic
- Least well defended
- Those who tend to become overly involved
- Those with unresolved personal issues (e.g., rescue fantasies)

We will all have reactions
to the stressful situations
we face.

This is perfectly normal.

Assess the 3 R's

Reactions

Risk Factors

Resilience

Stress Inoculation

WARNING!

**THIS ROCKET JOURNEY IS A HIGH SPEED TURBULENT
ROLLER COASTER RIDE THROUGH SPACE**

To ride Space Mountain, you must be in good health, and free from heart conditions, motion sickness, back problems, or other physical limitations.

We're sorry, expectant mothers should not ride.
Children under age 3 and persons who do not meet the height requirement may not ride.
Young children must be accompanied by an adult.

Prebriefing

1. **Encourage self-care.**
2. Describe the work in detail, covering setting, duties, schedule, ID process, and so on.
3. Prepare everyone for the sights, sounds, and smells they will encounter (and that these will form memories that may come back to them from time to time.



4. Be graphic in your explanations.
5. Allow an opportunity for graceful exit. It is okay to stop at any time.
6. Tell everyone about the availability of support services and any requirements that they attend defusing/debriefing sessions. Try to make it a requirement!
7. Encourage use of a buddy system and group meetings, for peer support.
8. Journaling helps too.

Worst Part of an Assignment?

Varies with the individual and may not be what you expect.

(e.g., In the morgue following an airline incident, it wasn't the body parts)

Coping

- When our homes, cars and offices become cluttered with garbage, we take out the trash.
- When our bodies are feeling pressured with liquid and/or solid waste, we go to the bathroom.
- But when our minds and our hearts are filled with painful thoughts and memories, many people try to hold things inside.
- **That doesn't help.**

Getting it out helps...

- Work it out, play it out, and talk it out with someone prepared to listen and offer the support you need.
- **Caution**: Talking it out works best when you share the pain with someone outside your family because what you need to share may overwhelm and traumatize your loved ones.

Disaster Distress Helpline

The ***Disaster Distress Helpline*** offers free, 24/7 support resource for disaster victims/survivors, disaster responders, and our partners:

- <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>
- Call **1-800-985-5990** or text **TalkWithUs to 66746** to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

Disaster Spiritual Care and Disaster Mental Health

Similarities	Differences
Both provide emotional support and comfort using principles of PFA (e.g., importance of meeting basic needs)	DMH are licensed providers; DSC are certified by professional associations or are paraprofessionals
Both refer to community resources for longer-term services	DMH trained in psychopathology; DSC not required to have such training
Both are trained to deliver multi-cultural services	Different language of engagement with client: DMH focuses on coping and stress; DSC focuses on meaning and faith
Both work with individuals and families in crisis and grieving	Different skill sets – DSC may participate in religious or spiritual rituals; DMH uses crisis intervention

Disaster Spiritual Care versus Disaster Mental Health Handout

V.1.0_2015_07_09

Owner: Disaster Cycle Services

Author: Disaster Spiritual Care

**WMD/T (BNICE and CBRNE) and
Pandemics**



Mass Casualty Disasters



**Large-Scale Disasters with
Few Casualties**



Single Family Fires / Floods

Someone you are helping
starts to cry...
Should you offer a tissue ?



Someone you are helping
tells you their story and
you start to cry...

Is this a problem?





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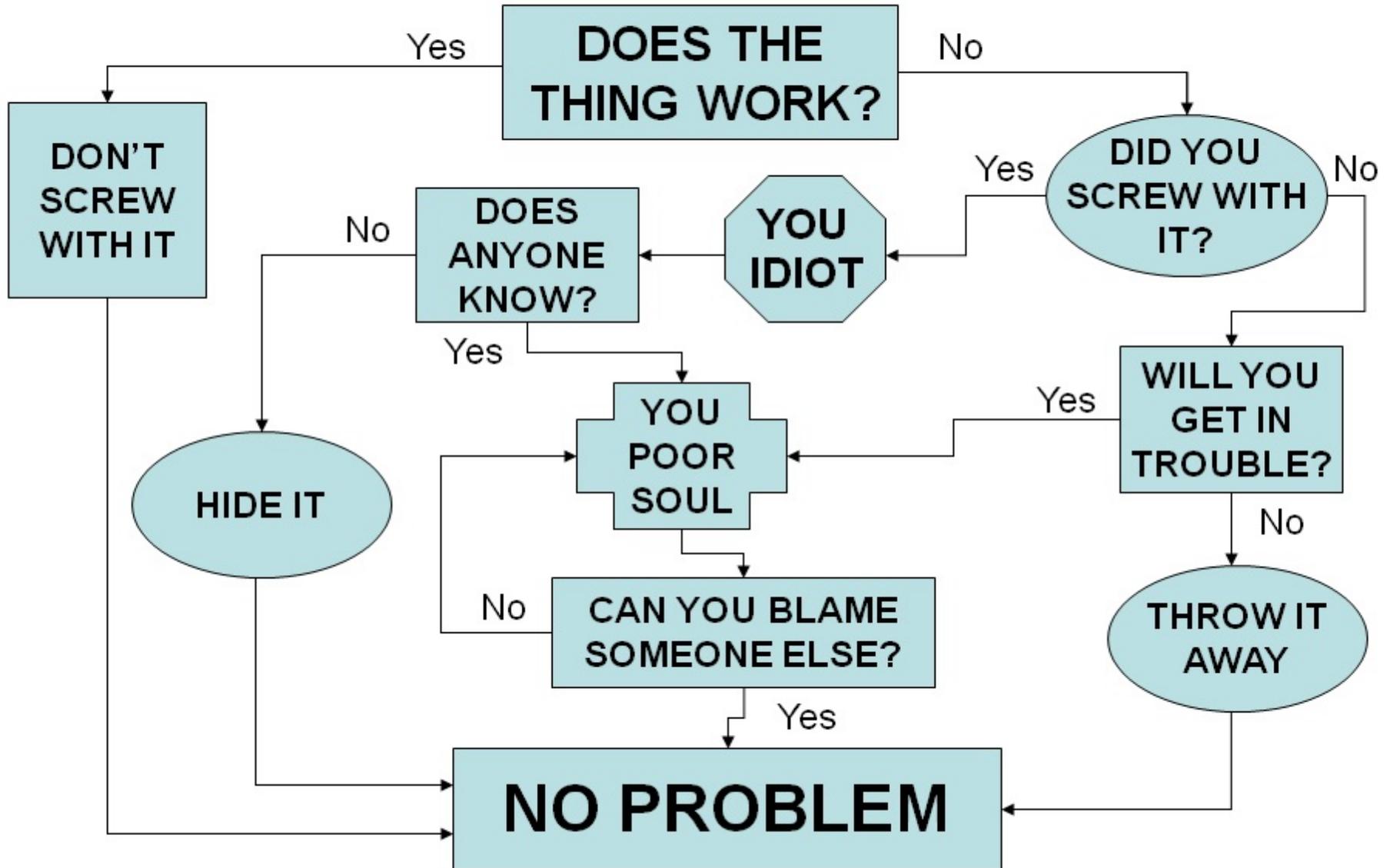
**Disaster Technical Assistance Center
Supplemental Research Bulletin**

**First Responders: Behavioral Health
Concerns, Emergency Response, and
Trauma**

May 2018

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/supplementalresearchbulletin-firstresponders-may2018.pdf>

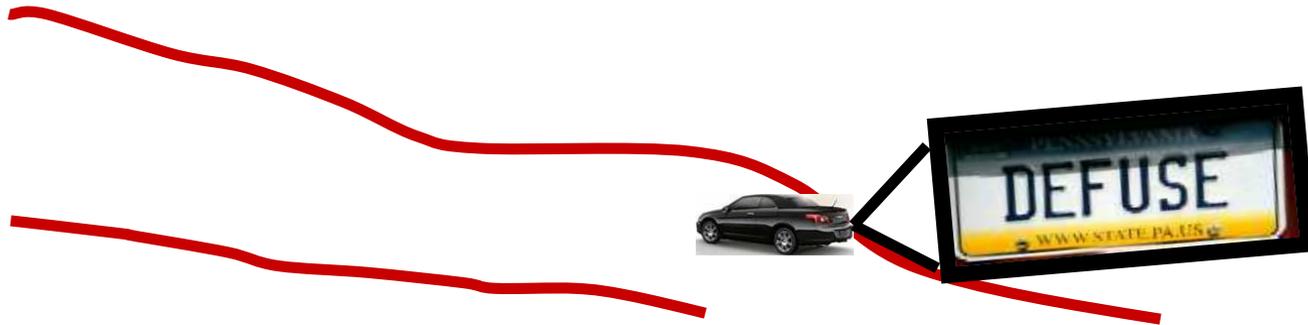
PROBLEM SOLVING FLOW SHEET





Thanks for participating in
this session and
thanks for all you do...

See you down the road!





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