

MY VIEW



Founder Wayne Fortin



GOOD THINGS LIE BENEATH

TIP volunteers encounter human beings at one of the worst times in their lives. Often these survivors of tragedy are understandably angry, stunned, guilty and confused. But as the tragic situation unfolds in front of them, our volunteers often see something quite unexpected and wonderful. They see human beings who are struggling... Yes. But they also see human beings as strong, flexible, and kind. Who would have thought that people could be at their best when the worst has happened to them?

There are 4 ways (at least) that those in the midst of tragedy show that they are resilient and good...

1. Survivors find sources of strength. Amazingly, no matter how tragic the situation is, survivors find something or someone that gives them strength. Their source of strength may be a family member, a familiar routine, or an important object.
2. Survivors help others. No matter how hurt they themselves are, survivors selflessly reach out to help others who are also affected.
3. Survivors abandon their prejudices and stereotypes. Survivors seem to abandon their prejudices and their judgements of others. They are willing to give and receive support from those who are very different from them. And they welcome TIP volunteers into their lives regardless of the volunteer's race, color, creed, or age.
4. Survivors give their situation meaning. They find a way of making the tragedy "theirs" and infuse the situation with personal meaning. They do this in many ways including reminiscing, playing special music in the midst of the tragedy, or by practicing a religious or cultural ritual.

In short, at the worst time in their lives human beings find ways to survive and to help others survive. And they disregard their superficial differences with others and connect with them on a human level. Our TIP experience has taught us that human beings are at their core good and strong.

The challenge for our TIP volunteers and for all those in the helping professions is to hold onto this "good things lie beneath" belief throughout our careers even when only our clients' "bad things" are

obvious (addiction, homelessness, mental illness...). Only then will we move beyond the “helping with problems” approach to seeing our clients’ strengths will we be able to give them the respect they want and deserve.

And only when we relate to our clients as the unique and beautiful human beings that they are will we be able to avoid burnout and do the difficult work that we do, year in and year out.

Wayne Fortin, Founder
Trauma Intervention Programs Inc
760-809-8471
Fortin.Wayne@gmail.com

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