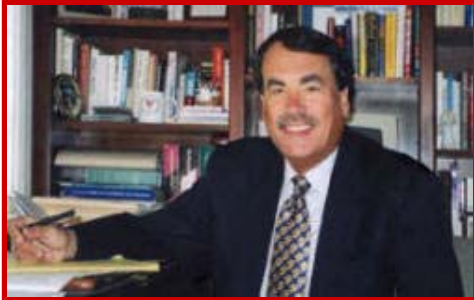




From the Founder: My Views



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**WHAT A DIFFERENCE WE MAKE!**

by: Wayne Fortin

As we near the end of the year, I believe it's important for us to reflect on WHY we are doing what we are doing in TIP. Why do TIP Volunteers dive into emotionally fiery situations without pay and often without a Thank You? . . . Why do family members adjust their lives to accommodate their TIP Volunteer family member? . . . Why do TIP Leaders devote countless hours to leading Tip Affiliates, and why do they voluntarily endure the stresses and strains that come with being a TIP Leader? . . . Why do TIP Board members take on the burdensome legal and financial responsibilities which come with being on a TIP Board? . . . Why do community members contribute their valuable time and money to TIP?

As we go about accomplishing the mundane tasks required to make a TIP program work, it's easy to lose track of what we are actually accomplishing. And in a program which tries to help people who are in shock and who are usually unable to express their appreciation, it's not easy to actually see or to quantify the difference we make. In a program where providing an intangible "caring presence" is primarily what we do, can we really say that we are accomplishing much of anything? Is "being there" with someone in crisis really worth all the time, stress, aggravation, sleep deprivation and expense? I'm sure that all of you at one time or another have asked yourselves these questions. I know I have. And when I do, I always come up with the same answer: TIP makes a HUGE difference on many different levels.

I would like to share with you the 5 ways I believe we are making a major difference in people's lives and ultimately in how emergency services are delivered in this country.

**1. The Difference We Make . . . Our Clients:** If we were responding to assist people with minor problems or who wanted a little bit of advice we probably would not make much of a difference by "being there" with them. But that's not the case. For most of the people we help, we are there with them at what they tell us later was "the worst hours of my life." Because our clients are so vulnerable having a TIP Volunteer show up to guide them through their horrific situation is HUGE. Don't take my word for it. Our clients in their letters refer to TIP Volunteers as Angels, and they tell us *"I'll NEVER FORGET what your volunteer did."* In other words, TIP Volunteers make a lasting difference in our clients lives. I can tell you as a former therapist that the help survivors of tragedy receive in the first hour effects their ability to heal tremendously. In short, TIP Volunteers are as important to the ability of survivors to recover from their trauma as counselors, pastors, family, friends and grief groups.

**2. The Difference We Make . . . The Ripple Effect:** Over the years, I have spoken to many of those we have helped and more often than not they mention that, as a result of being helped by a TIP Volunteer, they went on to help someone else in

trouble. One client actually said: *"After I was helped by the TIP Volunteer I resolved to pay her kindness forward."* So in some cases (not all, I'm sure) our clients turn around and become helpers. They help people who we will never know, but who I firmly believe would not have been helped (or helped as effectively) if not for the initial intervention of a TIP Volunteer.

**3. The Difference We Make . . . Inspiring Others:** When others learn of what TIP Volunteers do they are inspired...*"WOW, you do that as a Volunteer?"* Our clients and emergency personnel are inspired as well as everyone in the TIP Volunteer's world...family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. On a personal note, TIP Volunteers have inspired me during my ups and downs over the last 22 years with TIP. Volunteers renew my faith in the goodness of human beings and in the willingness of human beings to help each other...even when the person who needs help is a stranger.

**4. The Difference We Make . . . Emergency Responders:** TIP Volunteers make a HUGE difference to emergency responders who tell us we reduce their job stress and increase their job satisfaction. It's obvious to TIP Volunteers that emergency personnel on the scene really appreciate TIP Volunteer help. What is not so obvious is the positive effect we have on emergency responders even when we are not actively working with them on emergency scenes. Emergency personnel find it very reassuring as they go about their jobs just knowing that TIP is available. An ER nurse told me recently, *"It's just really good to know TIP is available and that I can just pick up the phone and call."*

**5. Making A Difference . . . Changing The Emergency System:** I know that "changing the emergency system" sounds pretty grandiose. I acknowledge that we are not anywhere near changing the entire emergency system in America. However, we have made progress. We have changed the emergency system in locations where we have TIP Affiliates. In these locations, the emergency system has a dramatically increased capacity to help citizens in crisis. While we have a long way to go to change the system nationwide, we have something very important going for us...a fine national reputation. This positive reputation as an organization which can operate a quality crisis response program is what enables us to grow and is what will enable us to eventually change the system nationally. How did we get this reputation? Our reputation has been (and continues to be) built "one TIP Call at a time." Every time a TIP Volunteer responds quickly to a call and provides a quality service, our reputation becomes a little bit stronger and we move a little closer to accomplishing our goal of "changing the system."

In summary, I believe that we owe it to ourselves to be mindful of the great difference we are making in the lives of individuals and in the emergency system as a whole. We do tough work in TIP, and unless we believe it's very worthwhile we will become discouraged and lose the tremendous energy that currently drives us. We can keep this "we are making a difference" belief alive in a number of ways...by sharing our "success stories" with each other, by cherishing the positive feedback we get from our clients and first responders and by encouraging each other as we go about our TIP work.

I wish all of you a wonderful Holiday Season, and a New Year filled with the knowledge that you are doing important work and making a big difference in the lives of others.

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