

**FINDING HOPE IN TRAGEDY: PEOPLE IN CRISIS**

**CAROL GILL**

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## DEDICATION

For my parents who have always  
offered support,  
and for Annie, who thinks I am perfect.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was two-fold: to explore the process through which tornado survivors sustain or re-claim their hopefulness in the aftermath of tragedy; and to then apply the knowledge of that process to teachers-in-crisis. It is my belief that teachers do not perceive daily “mini-crises” in the school as such and therefore, do not employ strategies to re-new themselves. This series of mini-crises build until they reach a magnitude similar to the stress one undergoes in a sudden, acute disaster such as a tornado. This may result in a feeling of diminished hope as well as an inability to cope. Perhaps if these teachers could recognize a mini-crisis as such and employ strategies similar to the tornado survivors to sustain or re-claim their hope, we would have less educators on stress leaves, burning out, or leaving the profession. Data were collected through a Hope Survey Scale and interviews with tornado survivors and, for teachers, through a stress survey and a survey of typical school crises with consideration to how individual teachers cope with these. Strategies for finding, maintaining, or re-building hope are discussed in terms of four common themes (self, cognitive processes, relationships, and spiritual). Results appear to suggest that, while both tornado survivors and teachers are aware of and utilize similar components found within the four hope-building themes, there are specific differences in how these components are applied, as well as in perceptions of the situation that constitute the difference between the hope-building strategies of the two comparative groups.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study is structured around the concept of hope. Three components are involved. I interviewed survivors of the Pine Lake Tornado (July 14, 2000, Pine Lake, Alberta) to ascertain what gave them hope to carry on. I looked for specific strategies of finding, maintaining, and re-building hope as well as symbols, words, and artifacts that connote *hope* for these survivors. Secondly, I surveyed teachers experiencing high levels of stress in their current teaching situation to determine how they perceive stress-causing incidents within their school or classroom and what strategies, if any, they employ for themselves to remain vital and healthy.

It was my premise (before beginning this project) that while tornado survivors experience a sudden, acute crisis (in the form of a physical shock), teachers experience a series of mini-crises throughout the school year that, if ignored, may eventually build to a magnitude similar to the crisis experienced in a tornado. Further, I do not think most educators apply strategies to cope with the chronic mini-crises experienced throughout the day that can lead to more teacher illness, depression, burn-out, and members taking a stress leave or leaving the profession because they do not recognize such crises as health-threatening. If researchers can learn how tornado survivors re-build or sustain their hope in the aftermath of a tornado, assist teachers in understanding that mini-crises can culminate in a reaction similar to that of undergoing a tornado, and apply the same hope-building strategies gleaned from survivors of a tornado to the teaching profession, perhaps more teachers would remain a healthy, vital part of our educational system.

Finally, I culminate the project with a wall hanging made of hope symbols suggested by the tornado survivors.

## BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

### A Personal Story

#### Teacher in Crisis

*Downstairs in the basement of my parent's home I have all the big dolls and stuffed animals sitting in neat rows. Two are in old-fashioned wooden desks--the kind with an armrest and a drawer underneath. The rest are sitting in little chairs from a child's play set. Attached to one wall is a fairly large blackboard about four feet long and three feet wide. I have yellow and white chalk--the kind real teachers use and not that powdery stuff you can buy at the store. This is my classroom and I teach the dolls and stuffed animals often. It is one of my favourite "by myself" games.*

*There are places where the chalk no longer sticks well to the blackboard because I cleaned it with water once. I carry a yardstick with me just like my own school teacher so I can point out things of importance to my extremely quiet and accommodating "class." Sometimes I use old textbooks my mom discarded from her teaching days and occasionally I teach long division because that is what I am learning in real school right now. I love this game.*

Funny how I had forgotten those long ago memories of playing teacher. Now since I have stopped teaching they have come back to me, surprisingly sharp and clear. What are they trying to tell me?

Sixteen years of teaching Special Needs, Integrated Occupations Program, and Conduct Disorder students have left me feeling disillusioned, angry, frustrated, exhausted, physically ill, emotionally chaotic, and very sad. The irony is that I really enjoy the

students--I still do. And I yearn to be back with them.

I am not angry with the students. I am disillusioned because my dreams were shattered and I am furious because many educational systems are emotionally abusive towards both teachers and students. I am also disappointed over my seemingly lack of coping skills. On rational days and with the assistance of distance and perspective, I recognize the flaws in the educational system I struggled against: intense and sophisticated levels of politics, a lack of integrity and sense of *fair play*, emotional child abuse, low staff morales, increased work expectations, and, for many individuals, a lack of a supportive, caring environment in which to function. As schools change to big businesses, finances become more important than people.

On less rational days I blame myself for speaking out against a system I found intolerable, for not recognizing each trying incident or situation as a mini-crisis and employing coping strategies to deflect the negative emotional build-up, and for not being *good enough* or *nice enough* or *quiet enough* to be considered a valued employee. No one wants a squeaky wheel in their smoothly running operation. If a squirt of oil does not stop the squeak; replace it. Sometimes I wish I had been politically and professionally correct and had not spoken against the injustices I saw. But if I truly remember who I am and what I believe in, I know I could not have *not* spoken out. Because then my integrity would not have allowed me to live with myself.

## A Personal Story

### The Pine Lake Tornado

*The phone is ringing. Checking my telephone display I see the call is from the RCMP. Why would they be phoning? I pick up the receiver and the voice on the other end identifies the caller as a member of the Red Deer RCMP Victims' Services Unit. A tornado has touched down at Pine Lake a few minutes ago. Critical Incident Stress Debriefers will be needed. Would I go?*

*We join the fray of emergency service vehicles racing towards Pine Lake. On our way we pass a steady stream of ambulances already transporting victims to hospitals. Overhead Stars Air Ambulance has begun what will be a continuous series of emergency flights to larger hospitals in Edmonton and Calgary. I am excited. I am scared. Adrenaline is surging through my veins.*

*We are unsure where Green Acres Campground is. Pine Lake has several campgrounds and church camps located around the lake. Which one is Green Acres? Follow the traffic. We come to police barricades and identify ourselves. We are allowed through. Finally we arrive at the Hub. This is where the "walking wounded" are being brought. Prairie Bus Lines has offered buses and drivers to transport tornado survivors from the actual site to the Hub. Names are being written down, food, hot drink, warm blankets, and socks are being handed out. We are checking for injuries, shock, and providing comfort. It is quiet and calm. All we hear are soft murmurs of family members and friends who have found each other and are quietly waiting.*

*The door of the Hub opens and controlled panic enters. Word quickly spreads throughout the building. A mother, holding her baby wrapped in blankets, cannot find her two-year old son. Her husband is looking for him. The list of names as well as the building is quickly checked. Mother's panic mounts. But wait, some survivors are being sent to a nearby building. Surely your child is there. We race up the hill to the building and explain the situation to a volunteer. A quick building search and name list check do not find the child. The mother sinks to a chair gently rocking her baby. Words cannot console. Someone holds her. Soon word spreads among the volunteers; the Calgary dive team has found a small child's body. It is male. This is so very sad.*

*I am sitting in the back seat of the Police Inspector's car peering into the dark and wondering what time it is. Somehow I have lost all sense of hours going by. We are going over to the actual tornado site to look for bodies. On our way we pass a never-ending line-up of ambulances. Traffic jams frustrate us--civilian vehicles are everywhere. Finally we reach the highway and the car surges to a very high speed. We feel as if we are flying and yet we cannot get there fast enough. Suddenly, the car brakes hard and swerves to the right. Golf carts are being used by volunteers as transport vehicles and we come within millimetres of annihilating one. This is so scary.*

*We reach the tornado site and get out of the car trying to orient ourselves to the locale. The picture is surreal--like on a television show. I am overwhelmed and confused by the hundreds of lights flashing on emergency vehicles, huge flood lights set up in choice locations, the hum of generators, lines crisscrossing roads and fields, and organized chaos. After a few minutes my mind begins to assimilate information again.*

*Command post is set up in a central location surrounded by the tents and vehicles of various emergency crews. I have to go to the bathroom but that will have to wait.*

*Two of us partner up. We swear we will not leave the other, no matter what. Slowly we descend into the actual site. At first there is only darkness. We flick on our flashlights and stop. I am struck by the paradoxical extremes: the absolute silence and the overwhelming destruction. Our light beams do not allow us to view the entire scene at once and I am thankful. While I am aware of destruction all around me, I cannot see the details. I begin to move again. Images and fragments of human lives are caught in my small spotlight. A child's toy, a lawn chair hanging from a tree, a car on its roof, a huge fifth wheel trailer wrapped around a tree, a woman's dress shoe, a picnic cooler, a baby stroller, blood.*

*We listen for voices and look for bodies. We call out but hear only the water from the lake washing against the shore. I pray I will not find anyone I know and fervently hope I do not find bodies. It is so dark that movements are slow and careful. Numbness begins to set in. Soon floodlights are set up and generators hum. A body is found under heavy debris and will have to be left until morning. This seems so irreverent and I am hesitant to move on. This is someone's loved one we are leaving behind.*

*Word is quickly passed that another storm front is moving through. The Police Inspector wants everyone out of the site. Relief washes through me as I join the others at the top of the hill where emergency vehicles and tents are set up. It is cold, windy, and beginning to rain. People crowd into tents, under tarps, and in emergency vehicles. We huddle together with blankets wrapped around us. McDonald's restaurant sends huge*

*boxes full of warm hamburgers which are quickly passed around. Hot juices, mustard and relish drip down our arms and McDonald's has never tasted so good. As we chat quietly while waiting for the storm to pass, I am moved by how well everyone involved in the rescue efforts (trained personnel, volunteers, community businesses, etc.) have worked together. There is such respect and consideration for each individual's efforts and I am proud to be a part of this group.*

*The storm passes. Front-end loaders and picker trucks are called in. Television-cameras and crews are everywhere. I really have to go to the bathroom but there are none. The tornado has broken off all the trees and with lights, people, and television cameras everywhere, there seems to be no safe place. There is a house nearby and although tarp is covering a portion of one corner taken by the tornado, it looks structurally undamaged. Surely there is a washroom available inside. I ask. I am told the house is being used as a temporary morgue and is off-limits. I feel chilled. Eventually Port-o-Potties are brought in. Several of us form a line-up.*

*I walk back over and rejoin my partner. A man from a nearby campground pulls up driving a golf cart with a small trailer attached. He lifts out two boxes of sandwiches, two large carafes of hot coffee, a box each of steaming hot soup and brown beans, and a container of squares. We thank him profusely for his generosity. Emergency service workers and volunteers slowly gravitate toward us wondering if they could have something to eat. They mistakenly assume we have supplied the food. We try to explain that we had nothing to do with it and give credit to the gentleman who had. Soon more food begins to arrive. Individual campers bring what they have, businesses and*

*community groups send food and drink in by the truckload. A police officer sees my partner and I handing out food and directs all in-coming food to us. We have become in charge of the "kitchen."*

Just like many others assisting with the Pine Lake Tornado, I saw and heard things I hope to never experience again. In conducting Critical Incident Stress Debriefings [for some agencies and volunteers involved in providing assistance to individuals] after the tornado, I heard many more stories: some joyful, some funny, others sad. But I also have memories and positive images reflecting the goodness that can come out of such devastation. Individually and collectively, people worked together to overcome this travesty.

There seems to be a resilient spirit embedded in the human soul that drives us towards life and living even after devastating experiences. Whether confronted with a tornado, the loss of a life-long career, an illness, or even a death, we still manage to find fragments of hope that lead us towards our future. I watched tornado survivors display this attitude of hope and wondered where that hope came from. How is it sustained and if it is lost, how does one re-find or re-build it? Could the answers to these questions be applied to teachers in a situation similar to mine?

## Components Integral to a Definition of Hope

The central question of this project is “what gives individuals hope to carry on when faced with seemingly devastating circumstances? A second aspect of this study will be to consider how we can apply the findings to assist teachers in crisis.

More and more researchers are suggesting that hope is the main factor in coping with and surviving difficult situations in life. Jevne (1993) and Korner (1970) state that hope is a “crucial anecdote to fear” (p. 123, p. 135). Stanley (1978) suggests that having hope allows us to escape from difficulty. Carson, Soeken, & Grimm (1988) have found that hope “provides people with a will to live” (p. 159). In fact, several researchers claim that without hope, life ends (Menninger, 1959; Frankl, 1959; Pruyser, 1963; Thurlow, 1967; Fitzgerald, 1971; Engel & Schmale, 1967).

If, as researchers, we acknowledge that hope plays such a vital role in life it behooves us to discover all we can about this paradoxically universal yet nebulous concept. While most people readily understand the word *hope* based on personal experiences, a common definition acceptable to all has yet to be found. There are, however, a number of hope components that many researchers do agree on.

Hope is often described as a mysterious element in life. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) suggest it is a “multi-dimensional dynamic life force” (p. 380); Miller (1989) and Korner (1970) consider it to be an “intrinsic element of life” (p. 23, p. 135); Jevne (1993) refers to it as a “complex intangible” (p. 123); and Menninger (1959) considers it to be “another aspect of the life instinct” (p. 483). All lead one to believe that hope is as much a part of us as our soul, as difficult to contain yet crucial to our very existence.

Korner (1970) and Dufault and Martocchio (1985) suggest that hope is always associated with important personal issues (whether one's own or someone/something one cares about) and McGee (1984) joins Dufault and Martocchio in thinking that hope is based on the perception of the individual. It is these aspects that render *hoping* as such a personal experience. As individuals, we do not all agree on what is important and our perceptions are totally unique. Situations labelled *difficult* by some would not be perceived that way by others. Further, hope is experienced in the context of one's own life (Jevne, 1993; McGee, 1984; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985) and there are many ways in which one's current situation influences hope. For example, often people feel more hopeful when they have a strong support system, are mentally and physically healthy, are financially secure, enjoy the roles they play in life, etc.

If, as is suggested in the preceding example, people feel more hopeful in a strong support system and when enjoying their life roles, it would follow that hope is a shared experience relying on relationships with others. The need for interpersonal relatedness in a hoping attitude is strongly supported by Jevne (1993), Dufault and Martocchio (1985), Stanley (1978), Obayuwana and Carter (unpublished), Korner (1970), and McGee (1984).

One of the most critical elements in hoping is that it allows one to focus on positive expectations of a future in which one believes one can participate (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Hinds & Martin, 1988; Stotland, 1969; Stanley, 1978; McGee, 1984; Jevne, 1993; Mader, 1988; Korner, 1970; and Mills, 1979). People believe they will somehow get through the trying situation and that the future, even though it is unknown, will be better. This allows us to believe that our current situation is only temporary.

We most notice hope or feelings of diminished hope when we feel *trapped* or *uncertain* about important life situations or issues (Jevne 1993; Miller, 1989; Farran, Herth & Popovich, 1995; Buckley, 1977; and Pruyser, 1963). In fact Mills (1979) states that “hope arises out of despair and would not rise without it” (p. 50). If, for example, we feel trapped in a dead-end job or are uncertain whether a loved one diagnosed with a serious illness will live, we come face-to-face with diminished hope and the need to sustain or buoy our hoping selves. We do not usually feel or recognize the role hope carries in our lives until it is challenged by threatening situations.

While considerable discussion arises in whether hope has trait or state dimensions, most writers agree that it has both. Hope is considered a trait in that one tends to be oriented as a more- or less- hopeful person in general. State dimensions refer to one’s hopefulness based on one’s current life situation. This has the propensity to change depending on one’s circumstances.

Jevne (1993), Mader (1988), Carson, Soeken, and Grimm (1988), and Dufault and Martocchio (1985) all suggest that there is a time element involved in hoping. While one’s hopes are experienced in the present or current situation, one’s knowledge and previous experiences of hope are based on the past, and all of one’s hoping self is directed at the future and the confidence in desired outcomes.

That for which we hope can be termed *hope objects*. These can be concrete (attaining a specific goal) or abstract (a closer relationship with God), explicit (stated in so many words) or implied (actions would suggest what is hoped for even though it is not

stated), and serious or trivial (usually based on individual's perceptions) (Jevne, 1993; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; and Korner, 1970). Jevne (1993) and Peretz (1970) note while what is hoped for is not always logical (believing one will win a scholarship when grades are all D-), Mills (1979) insists it is always based on reality. Reality, in this sense, is based on the *perception* of the hoping individual. Mills suggests that reality is not fixed in time, but open-ended. The hoping person assumes the universe has resources which are currently undiscovered and untapped. As one continues to re-evaluate reality in terms of one's own situation, one begins to perceive reality as having much more scope than previously believed. McGee (1984) and Menninger (1959) imply that as one gains greater maturity, "hope becomes more reality-based" (McGee, p. 37). This is especially noticeable in the differences between childhood and adult hopes as children are less able to predict the future which, combined with their lack of life experiences, view the world quite differently from adults (Stamm, 1995).

Bloch (1970), Stanley (1978), and Mills (1979) believe that hope enables transcendence. This does not mean that one simply grits one's teeth and *bears* or accepts what seems to be inevitable. Rather, "it is a nonacceptance that is positive but yet distinguishable from revolt" (Mills, 1979, p. 51). Hope gives one the capacity to accept the difficult situation as a part of one's current life and deal with the circumstances. At this point one is able to learn and grow while overcoming the situation and look forward to the promise of a new beginning or future. In this way one is able to transcend the situation and become more fully human.

Jevne (1993) states that the "experience of hope penetrates all dimensions of a

person's life" (p. 124). Physically, the hoping self has more energy (Jevne, 1993, Korner, 1970). There is also a feeling of more confidence, positive self-esteem, powerfulness, and control (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Heagle, 1975; Obayuwana & Carter, no date; Taylor, 1983). Jevne (1993) and Miller (1989) suggest that one's mood may be more positive and one will feel and be more optimistic and realistic. Almost all authors I researched insisted that hope was action-oriented. It involved planning, organizing, decision-making, and seeking help (Jevne, 1993; McGee, 1984; Menninger, 1959; Korner, 1970; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Mills, 1979; and Pruyser, 1963). Jevne (1993) stated that "all of these [the above] factors unite to produce a hoping process" (p. 124).

Both the goals of and the threats to hope are expressed in similar terms by all authors researched. Ultimately the goal of hope is to dissipate or hold at bay the feelings of fear and despair that arise when dealing with uncertainty associated with important personal issues. Lazarus (1974) and Korner (1970) view hope as assisting an individual in dealing with a situation in which one's personal needs were not met. Engle and Schmale (1967) join Korner in suggesting that hope strengthens or reinforces both the physiological and psychological defences thus permitting the individual to bypass stressful situations.

Threats to the hoping process were defined by Jevne (1993) as "anything or anything that lessens hope" (Jevne, 1993, p. 124). Miller (1989) and Farran and McCann (1989) listed loss, stress, major decisions, hardship, suffering, and uncertainty as typical hope threats. Miller also suggested bodily physical cues and evidence of medical setbacks are hope threats that can be associated with critically ill individuals. Dufault found very ill

individuals to perceive the behavior of their families and specialists as diminishing to hope. Examples of this might include over-solicitousness, *giving up* on the seriously ill individual, etc. Medically fragile individuals found that a lack of information regarding their illness (Dufault, 1981; Obayuwana & Carter, no date; and McGee, 1984) as well as their personal perception of being a burden (Miller, 1989) to be threatening. Perhaps one of the most hope-diminishing findings were those of Miller and Obayuwana and Carter in that spiritual distress seemed to be the most significantly crippling threat of all.

Threats to hope can have a very powerful impact on our lives. As noted earlier, many researchers agree that without hope, one no longer continues to live. Obayuwana, Collins, Carter, Rao, Mathura, and Wilson (1982) discovered through a study for the construction of a Hope Index Scale that when 3000 medical and psychiatric patients were tested, “the seriousness of suicidal intent more highly correlated with hopelessness than with depression” (p. 764).

There have been many attempts made by various researchers to describe or define hope. All include some of the previously suggested components integral to the hoping self. Grimm’s definition (1984) resonates with my personal perception of hope. She defines hope as follows:

Hope is a psychological characteristic [arising out of despair when an important personal issue is threatened], with trait and state dimensions, characterized by cognitive and affective behaviors which demonstrate an expectant orientation toward the future, planning of goals, and taking action to facilitate meeting one’s future expectations, all within the context of support relationships with others. (p. 5)

I have taken the liberty to add to the definition the phrase “arising out of despair

when an important personal issue is threatened” because this seems to be vital to initiating awareness of the hoping process. While the time element and the issue of transcendence are not specifically stated, they seem to be implied. Grimm’s statement, “An expectant orientation toward the future” suggests that time is understood to be associated. As well, her statements, “Characterized by cognitive and affective behaviors” and “taking action to facilitate meeting one’s future expectations” imply that one has the capacity to accept the difficult situation to such an extent as to deal with and overcome the circumstances. This appears to assume transcendence is inherent to the definition.

Having defined the components of hope, one must consider what hoping is not. Diligence must be used in confining hope to its basic components for if the boundaries are blurred to include words often thought to be similar in meaning, hope loses its power. Wishing and optimism may be mistaken as synonyms for hope. One of the components of hope, however is that it is reality-based. As Korner (1970) explains, when one hopes one is personally depending on the hoped-for event. The occurrence of the event has direct impact on one’s personal well-being. On the other hand, one does not depend on and organize one’s life around wishing. Wishing allows one to ignore reality principles.

Hope is also not the same as expectation. Menninger (1959) insists that if one is certain that what is hoped for will occur, this is no longer hope but expectation. Hope has an element of uncertainty to it. A more difficult concept to understand is that hope is not faith or spirituality. Carson, Soeken, and Grimm (1988) suggest that hope can be oriented towards earthly goals, actions, or relationships and/or towards eternal ones. Hope in eternal goals is grounded in a relationship with a Higher Power. Roberts (1982) indicates

that if one's hope is grounded in a relationship with God, one can still hope for earthly things. If these do not materialize, one can still be sustained by hope in God. Both these writers seem to be implying that if one believes in God, then hope can be found in spirituality and faith can be a part of the hopeful individual.

While coping is not hope Miller (1989), Weisman (1979), and Korner (1970) suggest that hope is of central importance to the coping strategies of an individual. Jevne (1993) says hoping and coping are different but concurrent processes. "Both," she explains, "help us manage that uncertainty inherent in an uncertain existence. Both support each other" (p. 124). She illustrates this concept by suggesting that people who cope but have little hope have lost their sense of aliveness. People having lots of hope but lacking coping skills cannot act on their hope. It appears that both hoping and coping working congruently provide the most benefit to individuals.

In summary, while maintaining a hopeful attitude is not the same as optimism, wishing, expectations, faith, or coping, these qualities can be part of a hopeful individual. In fact, as noted earlier, hoping is often both grounded in faith and in reality which render it vital to effective coping strategies.

## The Experience of Hope

After having read several sources of writings commenting on or related to the theme of hope, observing hope-like traits in the lives of others, viewing hope depicted by playwrights and other artists, and experiencing both hope and despair in my own life, it has become increasingly apparent that all of humankind experiences hope in a wide variety of ways. While each of us is unique in the many ways we find hope, because we are all members of the human race, there are similarities in the areas in which we search for and discover our hope.

These similarities or themes are general areas in which most individuals direct their energies to sustaining or re-building hope. These strategies can be thought of as sources to which one turns to sustain hope rather than as specific, step-by-step directions of how one builds hope. It is my belief that the degree of success one has is partially based on one's past experiences with diminished hope and one's maturity level. While researchers have identified many strategies for re-gaining a hopeful attitude based on their work with older generations, those with life-threatening illnesses, and individuals in therapy, I would like to categorize the various strategies into four broad themes: self, cognitive processes, relationships, and spirituality.

### Self

This category refers to those strategies that one must do for oneself--no one else can provide these for us. Strategies in this section include meaning or purpose in life, sense of control, personal competence, self-confidence, and maturity.

Jevne (1993), Miller (1989), and Dufault and Martocchio (1985) state that having

a purpose or meaning in life is important for some to feel hopeful. Denne and Thompson (1991) question those theorists who suggest that finding one's purpose or meaning in life involves growth, expression of self, and self-actualization because the theorists have not conducted studies to find support for such statements. Denne and Thompson did conduct a study to discover how one makes the transition from despair and meaninglessness to strong meaning and purpose in life. As well as a commitment to something beyond the self (such as belief in a spiritual being), they discovered that five stages are involved (not necessarily in order):

1. Becoming a responsible self. This requires a move from emotional dependence to self-reliance and from reactive to pro-active living.
2. Admitting and integrating the negative or personally unacceptable aspects of one's self and one's experiences.
3. Congruence between personally meaningful concepts and experience.
4. Meeting critical or decisional-turning points in life with decision, risk-taking, and either acceptance of negative outcomes or legitimization by positive results.
5. Working toward a balanced relation between self and the world.

Another strategy needed to feel hopeful is a sense of control in one's life (Miller, 1989; Taylor, 1983; Farran and McCann, 1989). Much of this is gained through cognitive processes which are discussed below. Along with this is a sense of personal competence or the extent to which one perceives oneself to be resilient, resourceful, and adaptable in the face of threatening situations (Miller, 1989). One's level of self-confidence and maturity combine with having a purpose or meaning in life, having a sense of control, and a feeling of personal competence to form the hope-enhancing label of *self*.

### Cognitive Processes

These are the thoughts and the knowledge or education one has regarding one's situation. An individual's thoughts have a profound influence on that individual's level of hope. Because people's perceptions create their reality, one's thoughts have the ability to increase or diminish one's attitude of hope. Since human beings are always thinking and are often unaware of the content of those thoughts, it follows that they must be hyper-vigilant in monitoring their cognitive processes to ensure their thought processes are of a hope-enhancing, as opposed to a hope-diminishing, nature.

Hinds and Martin (1988) conducted a study on adolescents with leukemia and found that the first step to re-gaining hope in teens was to stop negative thoughts and self-talk. These teens found that by concentrating on neutral or positive thoughts, their hope levels increased (or at least did not diminish). These findings are supported by Korner (1970) and Ersek (1992).

Snyder (1994) states that "how we think about and interpret the external environment is key to understanding hope" (p. 12). As suggested earlier, our perceptions form our reality. If individuals are unable to find positive aspects to their external environment, sustaining hope will be difficult. One's thought processes have the power to sway or change how one perceives what is occurring in one's world.

Researchers dealing with critically ill persons found that the amount of information, education and knowledge one had regarding one's current condition bore a direct correlation to one's level of hope with more education resulting in higher levels of

hope (Orne, 1968; Ersek, 1992; Jevne, 1993; Miller, 1989; and Hinds & Martin, 1988).

Finally, one's thought processes have a significant influence on one's perception of or belief in a future, based on reality, in which one is able to participate. Having faith that such a future is possible is a vital component of the hoping definition and process. Without it, all is lost.

All of the strategies under the realm of *cognitive processes* have a direct impact on the amount of control, self-confidence, and feelings of personal competence one has. I would suggest that both *self* and *cognitive processes* are essential strategies in the hoping process. Severely abused children have grown to be very hopeful adults even though they were often lacking significant relationships and spirituality in their lives. They survived because they had a strong sense of self and the cognitive processes of a survivor rather than a victim (Higgins, 1994).

### Relationships

This category includes relationships with all living beings: parents, family, friends, specialists, pets, etc. Virtually all researchers were in agreement that relationships were important in hope-building strategies (Jevne, 1993; Miller, 1989; and Farran & McCann, 1989). Orne (1968) in his study on the mechanisms needed to maintain hope in psychology patients found the degree to which the therapist liked and cared about his patient had a profound effect on the patient's level of hope. Farran and McCann (1989) conducted a study regarding how hope is sustained in older adults and discovered a key component was maintaining support networks. Even severely abused children who lacked significant familial relationships were able to "effectively recruit other people's 'invested regard'" and

demonstrated a strong capacity to take one momentary, positive interaction with another living being and nurture or *live on it* for very long periods of time (Higgins, 1994, p. 20). It seems that humans need each other in maintaining and re-building their hope.

### Spiritual

This theme assumes a belief in something we perceive to be greater than ourselves. It embraces all aspects of the potentially spiritual: a God, angels, church, clergy, prayer, spiritual beliefs (traditional or alternate) and nature. It is supported by Jevne (1993), Miller (1989), Farran and McCann (1989) and, in fact, Carson, Soeken, and Grimm (1988) insist that spiritual strategies are a prerequisite for hope. Since meaning and purpose in life are hope-enhancing strategies, Denne and Thompson's (1991) statement that hope is found in "willed, intellectual, emotional, and acted upon commitments to something beyond self: an eternal entity called God" (p. 115) strongly supports the faith component. I would suggest that, for this study, the term *God* be understood as a Spiritual Being thus encompassing all spiritual belief systems including Buddhism, First Nations, etc.

The need for a spiritual aspect or acknowledgement to sustain hope in one's life was also noted by Farran and McCann (1989) in their study of older adults and Hinds (1984) in a study of adolescents with leukemia. Buckley (1977) views *spiritual strategies* as the ability to revere the earth and other living things, to say "I hope" with no specific expectations, to acknowledge the dialectical nature of hope (if winter is here then spring cannot be far behind), and to have enough faith and confidence in a Being to say "as long as that Being is there, I will have no fear" (p. 345). Perhaps Mills (1979) states the need for belief in a Higher Power most eloquently, "Hope, phrased as poetry or prayer, gives

expression to pain, and in so doing, redeems the pain. The anguish becomes a fixed and limited adversary rather than an omnipresent, malevolent, lurking shadow with no boundaries” (p. 50).

The four broad themes (self, cognitive processes, relationships, and spiritual) under which humankind’s strategies for sustaining and building hope fall are all interrelated. It is rare that one would use all strategies at once as some techniques may be more appropriate to specific situations than others but it is quite likely that one may use a combination of hope-building sources. Cognitive processes combined with any of the other categories is an obvious example. As well, one may be more adept at using some strategies over others. For example, if one’s most relied upon strategies (relationship with a significant other) is no longer available (significant other moves, dies, etc.), one may flounder as one struggles to locate strategies of a similar nature or develop new strategies to cope with situations in which one would normally turn to the [unavailable] supportive individual. This does not suggest that the strategies are independent of the aspect of the individual’s life they are applied to. Rather, it is the very nature of the crisis or need in one’s life that defines the nature of the strategy or strategies engaged. In general, however, I would suggest that strategies to build and sustain hope, no matter how unique or personal, can all be categorized under one of the four themes described.

As with the definition, there seems to be no consensus among researchers on a theory or model of hope. Jevne (1993) and Dufault and Martocchio (1985) suggest a two-level model which consists of specific or particularized hope (specific, valued hope objects, goals or desires) and intangible or generalized hope (an overall sense that the

future will be positive regardless of attainment or failure to attain specific hope objects).

McGee (1984) is much more concrete in her model. She visualizes hope and hopelessness as being on opposite ends of a continuum. As one encounters a problem or unmet need, a response must be chosen based on the perceived situation and a course of action must be taken which hopefully, leads to a successful outcome. The degree of hope one feels at any given time results from one's perception of the problem and the actions taken to meet this difficulty. Therefore, one's current level of hope corresponds to a location along the hope continuum.

Korner (1970) suggests that hope is a dynamic relationship between an affective component (which reflects emotional significance of hope) and a rationalizing chain with links constructed from bits of reality combined with pieces of logic and reasoning. Since hope must be based on reality, any weak links in the chain (representing one's doubts or questioning of reality) are constantly under pressure to be reinforced by ever-better pseudologic. If these links deteriorate to the point where they clash with reality, the chain breaks. At this point all rationalizing is dropped and *pure hope* is engaged ("I know it will work out." "I have faith."). There is an ever-changing balancing of the affective component, the rationalizing chain, and external stresses. As more stress is encountered, one places more reliance on the hope structure. Like a child's teeter-totter, a balance must be kept between the affective and rational components. If there is less of one, there must be more of the other.

Nekolaichuk (1995) has an interesting theory of where, in space, hope might be located. Rather than visualizing hope as being opposite hopelessness or despair on a

continuum, Nekolaichuk considers it in multi-dimensional terms. She states, “Hope is conceptualized as a multidimensional structure, defined by three primary factors” (p. 90): personal spirit (intrapersonal experience of hope dependent on the meaning one assigns to one’s situation or life), risk (influenced by how predictability in certain aspects of one’s life enhances the boldness or risk-taking spirit), and authentic caring (the experience of hope within relationships). These three factors working together define one’s level of hope and its location. This level and location in space changes across people and over time in keeping with one’s situations.

While there are other researchers who have offered theories or models of hope, the models and theories discussed in the preceding lines reflect those reflections on which I base my own hope model.

My conceptualization of how hope works is based on a combination of models presented in this document as well as on personal experience. Underlying the entire process are two levels of hope as suggested by Jevne (1993) and Dufault and Martocchio (1985). The first is specific hope and refers to specific, valued hope objects, goals or desires. When, for example, one hopes for the recovery of a seriously ill loved one or the finding of a job, one is focussing on specific hope. The second level, generalized hope, is an overall sense that the future will be good whether or not one attains specific hope objects. It is simply an unexplainable feeling of hope that is not tied to anything or one.

At each of these two basic levels one’s hope can be challenged or remain unchallenged (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1985). These authors state that unchallenged hope is a “general, untested form of hope that doesn’t have a long-reaching impact on our

lives” (p. 17). We experience and deal with this aspect of hope on a more superficial level. An example of this would be one’s hope that it does not rain on the day of one’s upcoming wedding. Our entire beings are not depending on whether or not it rains.

The second level, *challenged hope*, is experienced when one’s hope is seriously tested such as in a crisis. Farran, Herth, and Popovich (1985) suggest this is the type we encounter when we are faced with “stressful or difficult life experiences that challenge the basic core of our existence and have an uncertain outcome” (p. 17). An example of this second level of hope would be the discovery that one has cancer or has been laid off work.

The sources available to us in locating hope are three-fold and are accessible when experiencing both challenged and unchallenged hope. The first source in which we find hope is what I refer to as “bright spots” in our daily lives (Jevne, 1993). We do not have to seek out these moments. They are available to all who are observant and take time to notice. Bright spots are the tiny, fleeting happenings throughout our day such as a friendly smile, a shared humorous moment, a student who suddenly understands a concept, birds singing, the smell of fresh rain, a single daisy growing out of a sidewalk crack, and so on. The list is endless. Most humans can experience several bright spots in a day if they are open to them. Individuals can also be bright spots in another person’s day. Because one’s time on earth is made up of a series of moments which combine to form days, these bright spots become very significant in one’s life. They can affect and enhance the quality of living. In desperate situations, these tiny moments can be all-sustaining because they keep one going for a little bit longer. They can beautify the day or provide a moment of hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. For a suicidal person, a phone call from a cherished friend

can provide the bright spot that makes the difference between life and death. Bright spots give us a steady infusion of hopeful moments and provide us with a glimpse of what sustaining hope could be.

Individuals also experience times in their lives when they must actively search for a more sustaining kind of hope. These are the sources of hope to which one turns time and again when one's hope has been seriously challenged (Jevne, 1993). This is the kind needed in very difficult or desperate situations, on which one can lean, and which may actually carry one through to standing on one's own again. I believe that as one matures, this sustaining hope grows and deepens to become the bedrock of one's life and one's hope.

While one may find bright spots in the same general sources as one locates sustaining hope, these sources are actively sought when our hope is challenged. As discussed previously, the four general categories in which people locate hope-building sources are: self, cognitive processes, relationships, and spiritual.

The third source of hope available to us is what McGee (1984) referred to as "pure hope." When one can see no acceptable solution to a situation, lacks a sense of control, and cannot actively engage strategies to positively impact the future in a way desired, one can still have an overall feeling of *I hope*. Perhaps this is where the Alcoholics Anonymous saying, "let go and let God" originated. This goes further than acknowledging hope-building spiritual strategies. It is an over-riding sense of God being in His universe and all will be well regardless of the outcome. Pure hope differs from generalized hope in that when challenged, one may temporarily lose one's overall sense of hope. When one has

done all one can, there may come a time when human efforts are no longer enough. This is where pure hope arises. It is all one has left.

Hinds (1984) and McGee (1984) suggest that both internal and external strategies are involved in the hoping process. One relies more heavily on external sources of hope (relationships with others) when very challenged and may actually have to *borrow* hope for a while. A vital component inherent in the process of utilizing internal or external hoping strategies as well as in selecting the nature of hope needed (bright spots, sustaining hope, pure hope) is one's current level of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual energy. As Hinds (1984) notes, one must have energy to carry out an action conducive to achieving a hope object. People who are ill or under considerable stress have less energy and, therefore, fewer resources. At this point, one cannot always rely on internal sources of hope and may be in need of borrowing from others.

Eventually, over time, individuals gradually glean more and more understanding from their experiences of being challenged and locating hope. Through understanding and maturity, they begin to rely more heavily on their internal sources of hope (self, cognitive processes, and spiritual) and begin to form a bedrock foundation on which to build. Individuals can test and learn to rely on this foundation in times of need as well as draw from it to offer hope to others. My experience is that when individuals reach this point they rely primarily on their internal sources and attain what I believe is a *deep, abiding faith* that renders each virtually unshakeable in times of challenge.

As does Nekolaichuk (1995), I also consider one's degree or level of hope as being multi-dimensional as opposed to on a continuum consisting of hope and hopelessness at

opposite ends and varying degrees of hope in between. However I believe the actual location of hope to be where one experiences or feels it--within oneself. It is this feeling that renders the experience as personal as it is. If hope were located somewhere in space (i.e. *out there*), I would question the meaningfulness of the experience to the individual.

If, in any given situation, one were to assign a number between one and ten (one being least and ten being most) representing one's *perceived* current level of hope for each aspect in the hope model (see Figure 1):

Level of Hope:            Generalized vs. Specific Hope

Magnitude of Hope:    Unchallenged vs. Challenged

Sources of Hope:        Bright Spots, Sustained Hope and  
Pure Hope (Internal vs. External)

Influenced by:           Amount of Energy

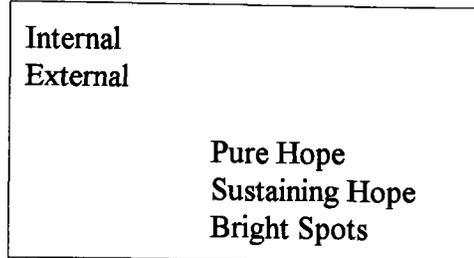
and drew lines intersecting each of these points, one would have one's current degree or level of hope at that time based on one's perception of the given situation. At the very same moment, one's level of hope may be at a different location for a separate situation.

The key factor involved is one's *perception* of the situation and their corresponding assigned degrees of hope. In conceiving of such a hope model (Figure 1) as being based on one's perception of one's situation, an individual's level of hope may appear quite illogical and unrealistic to others. Such is the nature of hope.

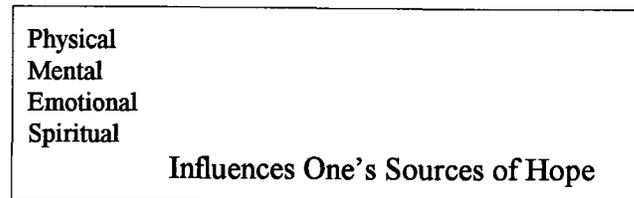
Figure 1

HOPE MODEL

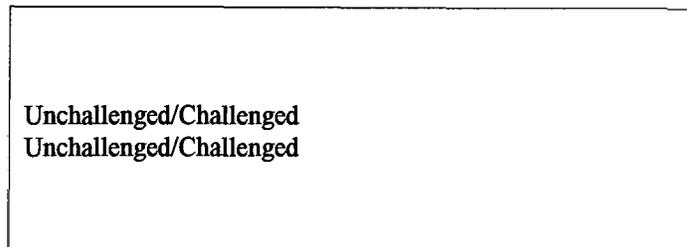
Sources of Hope



Energy Level

(Acting in both directions--up  
and down.)

Magnitude of Hope



Level of Hope



## CRISIS

We, as human beings, watch it on our televisions, hear it on our radios, read about it in our newspapers, and gossip about it in our conversations--the tragedies of others. Someone killed in a car accident, a student viciously beaten to death by a handful of teens, a newborn baby found in a dumpster on a cold winter's morning, entire villages of people left homeless by a natural disaster. If one is fortunate enough to be physically and emotionally removed from the situation, one may be only momentarily affected by these daily bombardments of tragic events. But what about those individuals who have experienced the event first-hand and the people who have helped them through the situation in some manner? By these I mean the Emergency Services Rescue Workers, medical personnel, counsellors, family members, friends, and so on. These events most certainly impact the lives of all these people. How do those who care for these individuals help them to recover and go on to lead emotionally healthy lives and, more importantly, how do they help themselves?

It has only been in this century past that researchers have realized frightening or tragic events can affect individuals emotionally and can actually have debilitating consequences. Sadly, other than accessing psychologists which, many found financially unfeasible or decided against due to self-esteem/pride issues, it has only been in the last few decades that cost-free programs have been developed to assist traumatized individuals in the recovery process. One such program is Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM).

Peurifoy (1997) suggests that CISM had its beginnings in the aftermath of World War I. The term, *shell shock* was used to describe those soldiers experiencing severe trauma as a result of their fighting engagements. After the Second World War, the term was changed to *battle fatigue*. At this time, severe emotional distress was recognized in those who had experienced the trauma of combat first-hand but not in those reporting on the situation (newspaper reporters) or assisting after the fact (clergy, medical personnel) let alone victimized innocent bystanders such as villagers losing their homes, being bombed, etc.

In the late 1960s, Mitchell (no date) suggests police psychologists found themselves dealing with more law-enforcement stress than in previous decades. By the mid 1970s stress-related problems began showing up regularly in emergency-medical-services personnel. *Vicarious* or *secondary traumatization* was being recognized as a legitimate concern. Researchers began acknowledging that those assisting individuals involved in tragedies or crises could also be emotionally wounded and vulnerable. At this point J. T. Mitchell developed a process to assist emergency service personnel in managing traumatic stress. This process is referred to as *Critical Incident Stress Debriefing* (CISD) and is meant to prevent post-traumatic stress in high-risk occupational groups (Everly & Mitchell, 1992). High-risk businesses and industrial settings have since adopted CISD in some form or variation.

Mitchell (1983), ICISF, Inc. (1996), Littauer (1985), Selye (1980), Montgomery and Morris (1989), and Levin (1989) as well as many other researchers all agree that stress is a normal occurrence in human activities. They also support Mitchell (no date) in

his definition that stress is

a state of physical and psychological arousal that follows any demand made upon a person. Stress is always a reaction to an event or situation that places considerable pressure upon a person. When demands become extremely threatening, overwhelming, or severe, they often produce a heightened state of physical, cognitive, behavioral and emotional arousal commonly called *traumatic stress* or *critical incident stress*. (p. 4)

He goes on to say that these highly stressful situations may cause personnel to “experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either immediately or later” (Mitchell, 1993, p. 36). Although Mitchell’s work centers around disasters of a large-scale or personal nature, critical incident stress is commonly experienced by most individuals involved in a traumatic incident.

The CISM program is designed and used for those individuals who have been involved in a disaster. International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. (1996) defines disaster as “intense events that quickly overwhelm the coping skills of those exposed to them and set the stage for both critical incident stress and post traumatic stress disorder” (no page number). While this definition does not specifically state a focus on natural (tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, avalanches) and human-made (fires, gas leaks, bomb explosions) disasters or accidents (car crashes, drownings), it seems to be implied by much of CISM’s focus and literature. This has allowed provision for structured assistance to traumatized individuals attempting to cope with such events. It has also, however, seemingly ignored personal life crises such as job loss and lay-offs, critical illnesses, divorce, and work-related stress in professions other than those involving crisis care. This would include clergy, reporters, jurors, teachers, social workers, and others exposed to

individuals or groups undergoing traumatic events.

Montgomery and Morris (1989) have suggested the term *life crisis* as a more inclusive alternative to using the word *disaster*--especially in relation to personal disasters. They define a life crisis as “any event that causes you to experience unusually strong emotional reactions that interfere with your ability to function, at the time or in the future” (p. viii). This term and its definition are supported by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. (ICISF) (1996). This is an important recognition as it allows provision for individual or small group crises of a personal nature such as divorce, death, job loss, serious illnesses, etc. Thus, the helping professions’ understanding of, and therefore, need for adequate intervention programs for crisis situations expands to recognize and include *all* types of disasters and crises be they individual, small group, or large scale.

Disasters usually fall into two broad categories: personal and large scale. Personal disasters are defined by Montgomery and Morris (1989) as “traumatic crises affecting only one victim, or at most, a few victims” (p. 13). Usually such disasters have suddenly caused or threatened physical harm or significant personal property loss or damage. Examples of these would be sexual assault, torture, robbery, burglary, and accidents. I suggest that this category be broadened to include life crises such as those suggested previously. While usually not as violent in nature, the experience can be overwhelming and adequate assistance may be required for coping. For the purposes of this document my suggestions are twofold:

1. To differentiate between the two terms (personal and large scale disasters),

personal disaster will be understood to include a potential element of violence and physical harm whereas life crisis will, for the most part reflect more interpersonal conflict.

2. The category of *personal disasters* will be broadened to include life crises such as those suggested above.

Montgomery and Morris (1989) suggest that large scale disasters are often destructive, violent events that have more potential for trauma than even intense personal disasters. The reason for this is that the disaster often occupies all of the victim's observable world for a period of time, completely surrounding him or her. It is quite feasible that in addition to affecting each individual, it may also affect family, acquaintances, the neighborhood, and perhaps, the whole community. Because of the large number of victims involved, crisis counselling may be stretched to overwhelming thus placing traumatized individuals at risk for critical incident stress or post traumatic stress disorder (ICISF, 1996; Everly & Mitchell, 1992).

Figley (1985), DSM-III-R (p.250), and Stamm (1995) all suggest that trauma represents an "emotional state of discomfort and stress resulting from memories of an extraordinary, catastrophic experience which shattered the survivor's sense of invulnerability to harm" (Figley, p. xviii). Figley recognizes three levels on which trauma can be experienced. The first level, known as *primary trauma* refers to the effects on those who were directly in harm's way. In the Pine Lake Tornado of July, 2000, this would be those individuals present at the actual site as the tornado touched down. Primary trauma refers to those experiencing the actual event be it a rape, a job loss, a home on fire, an accident, etc.

*Secondary trauma* is used to describe those who supported and helped the primary trauma victims and survivors. In the tornado example, these would include emergency services and medical personnel, Search and Rescue, Victim's Services, CISM volunteers, the Canadian Red Cross, family members, community support agencies, and individuals choosing to offer food, clothing, shelter, and comfort, etc.

A third group that can be affected, and often goes unnoticed, are the supporters of the secondary trauma individuals and are labelled as experiencing *Tertiary trauma*. These would be the family, friends and co-workers of the secondary supporters who, while not involved with the event itself, represent the support systems for those who were.

While concern and assistance for primary trauma survivors has long been recognized, such has not always been the case for those experiencing secondary and tertiary trauma. Since its recognition in the 1960s and mid 1970s by police psychologists and medical personnel, researchers have referred to this phenomenon as *secondary traumatization, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout*.

Vicarious trauma affects those exposed to an overdose of victim suffering and includes such groups as mental health professionals, psychologists, emergency services and medical personnel, clergy, teachers, social workers, refugees, jurors, reporters, witnesses to capital punishment: anyone exposed to traumatic material. It also includes those people who care about and listen to the stories of the secondary trauma individuals (*tertiary trauma victims*). Examples include the families of medical personnel, fire fighters, police officers, and so on and often receive the effects and repercussions of a crisis vicariously through their loved ones.

Rescuers who go into a disaster area after initial impact can have a crisis reaction for several reasons. Many assume that because they miss the actual impact, or the rescue is a part of their job, they are not affected in a way the actual victims are. In actual fact, Montgomery and Morris (1989) suggest that rescuers and other secondary trauma individuals (such as medical personnel caring for the injured, reporters witnessing events in a war-torn country, etc.) may actually have “more prolonged and closer contact with [disaster] effects” (p. 113) than the individual victims who experience the event personally but are usually quickly removed from the situation. An example is a car accident in which the injured are taken to hospital. Rescuers must remain in that same situation, deal with *each* victim involved, and often remain at the scene for some time, arrange for clean-up, and have paper work and follow-up investigation to complete. The time spent by a rescuer with the actual accident situation is often much longer than the individual victims involved.

The nature of one’s field of work can also be a contributing factor to trauma. Nursing personnel in the emergency department, intensive care unit, critical care unit, and other high tension areas are routinely exposed to a great deal of human suffering. Stamm (1995), Levin (1989), and Mitchell (no date) suggest that this constant exposure can tear or wear down the usually effective emotional defences of these workers and cause them to experience significant stress-related difficulties. In addition there is still an erroneous perception that *professionalism* and *emotional detachment* in one’s work renders the need for support as a sign of weakness. This may result in individuals becoming more isolated in their problem because they are unable or unwilling to ask for support from colleagues and friends.

These rescue and helping personnel often see themselves as in a vital and supportive role thus they may try to suppress their own feelings in order to assist the victims. A work history of suppressing feelings can result in serious emotional repercussions at some point in a rescuer's career. As well, major disasters can make enormous demands on the rescuer's personal resources producing fatigue and affecting their ability to cope. An example of this are the Canadian Red Cross personnel in the Red Deer office. The Pine Lake Tornado has generated an additional workload for approximately eighteen months. One individual working there had only one weekend off in the four months following the tornado. Because the nature of most individuals in the helping professions is to *give* (often at their personal physical and emotional expense), the needs of the rescue workers may go unnoticed and unmet (Stamm, 1995; Levin, 1989; Mitchell, no date; Montgomery & Morris, 1989).

Stamm (1995) suggests that the risk for secondary and tertiary traumatization increases if the exposure is unexpected or is entered into without adequate preparation. It can also affect those who work with or are exposed to the *stories* of many disaster and trauma victims. Stamm suggests there are three risk factors involved:

- (1) exposure to the stories (or images) of multiple disaster victims,
- (2) one's empathic sensitivity to their suffering, and
- (3) any unresolved emotional issues that relate to the suffering seen.

Marmar, Weiss, Metzler, and Delucci (1996) suggest that those individuals most at risk for potential traumatization were those who had greater feelings of perceived threat, coped with by means of either escape, avoidance or self-control alone, were often younger

in age (as opposed to those less at risk), and had greater exposure to stress. As well, shy, inhibited persons who were uncertain about their identity, reluctant to take leadership roles, had more globalized thinking styles, believed that fate is determined by factors beyond their control, and had suppressed emotions and engaged in wishful thinking were also at greater risk for trauma. Stamm (1995) also suggests that introverted or shy individuals may have stronger emotional reactions to upsetting events. Children, often a forgotten group, are also at great risk because they are less able to predict the future and take steps to avoid situations. As well, they see the world quite differently from adults (Stamm, 1995).

While research (Marmar, et al, 1996; Stamm, 1995; NIOSH, no date) suggests that certain personality styles may be at higher risk for difficulties, it stands to reason that emotionally isolated individuals with few, if any, support systems and those who lead unbalanced lives (i.e. *workaholics*) are also at risk. Results of a recent study completed by Rudolph, Stamm, and Stamm (1997) indicate that compassion fatigue should be considered at the administrative and policy levels of businesses and organizations whose key industry is caring for people.

Indeed, the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing program was founded in response to the growing number of well-trained, seasoned employees in high-risk occupations who were leaving their professions, especially after particularly traumatic experiences. By discussing the event or series of events in a group, research has found that the psychological impact is lessened, personnel are in a better position to cope, and fewer employees were leaving their occupations (Everly & Mitchell, 1992). In comparing the

San Diego Air (airline) disaster in which only sporadic one-on-one crisis intervention was offered to the Cerritos Air (airline) disaster in which twelve CISD demobilizations were set up along with a crisis hotline and follow-up, Everly and Mitchell found San Diego lost five ranking police officers, five firefighters and fifteen paramedics within a one-year-time period due to mental health needs as opposed to the loss of one paramedic in Cerritos. Economically, offering immediate crisis-care assistance to employees is crucial to organizations involved in assisting people in potentially traumatic situations.

I would argue that one cannot explicitly state that one disaster (be it personal or large-scale) is more traumatic than another. While it is acknowledged that large scale disasters do tend to affect masses of people, some comfort can be found in the realization that one is not alone; many others have experienced the same event. Involvement in personal tragedy carries with it a sense of isolation and occasionally fear, that one was selected as a victim. As well, large scale disasters tend to have clear time boundaries and are of limited duration. A tornado, for example, lasts for a relatively brief period of time and then one is left attempting to cope with the aftermath. Personal crises often do not have such definite time boundaries. A job loss or an illness may be on-going and coping is more difficult because there is no definite *ending* and one must live with the situation on a daily basis. In addition, while most people are readily aware of a large-scale disaster, very few may be aware of an individual's personal or life crisis. Therefore, support readily available for mass disasters will only be available for those victims of personal or life crises who choose to seek help. It is my belief that each individual experiences a disaster or life crisis on a personal level and it is one's perception of, and reaction to, the event that

registers the degree of trauma experienced.

### Reactions to Trauma

Informed with a brief overview of the history and definition of crisis as well as the different kinds of crisis currently recognized, it is time to consider the individuals involved in crisis situations. What are specific human reactions to a traumatic event and how does one cope to the extent that such an experience can be integrated into a future life?

Most researchers suggest that the typical crisis response and recovery cycle has three main phases or stages (Montgomery and Morris, 1989; Mitchell, 1983; APA, no date; Raphael, 1994; ICISF, 1996; and Figley, 1985). Some researchers may also include sub-components of the three main phases.

#### Initial Impact

The first phase, referred to as the initial impact or crisis response occurs during the hours or days immediately following the event. Often the victim is not capable of normal functioning in this stage. Typical responses during this phase are shock and denial which are the body's normal protective reactions to an unexpected crisis. The American Psychological Association defines shock as a "sudden and often intense disturbance of one's emotional state that may leave one feeling stunned or dazed" (Monograph, Just The Facts, no page). Denial or disbelief are initial coping mechanisms protecting the individual against the full impact of the crisis. They involve either not acknowledging that something very stressful has happened or not experiencing the full intensity of the event and may leave the person feeling temporarily numb or disconnected from life.

At some point in the first few hours or days following the initial stressor, the

individual in crisis will come to the realization that the event is real and Mitchell (1983) states that this may be accompanied by an intensification of the shock response. This recognition or understanding that the event is real triggers what Mitchell (1983) calls a “non-emotional survival state” (p. 5) in which the victim’s emotions become frozen or flat and thinking is focussed entirely on survival. At this point the victim will do almost anything to survive and, depending on the duration, will usually stay in this state until the crisis is over. For crises that continue for weeks, months, or even years (such as a serious illness, job loss, war, drought, or hostage-taking situations), Montgomery and Morris (1989) suggest the major emotional response will occur when one first becomes aware of the situation. The crisis response usually does not last more than four to six weeks even though a clear release from the crisis may not occur until some time later.

#### Recoil or Recovery Cycle

The second phase is often called the recoil or recovery cycle and Mitchell (1983) and Montgomery and Morris (1989) refer to this as the period in which the ordeal has passed and the individual is left with the need to cope with the emotional and sometimes, physical, after-effects. At this point the victim tries to regain a sense of self and some control over what is happening in his life. This can be done in a variety of ways and usually involves a range of uncomfortable emotions that the victim must process and integrate into his life.

Mitchell (1983), Everly and Mitchell (1992), van der Hart, Brown, and van der Kolk (1989), ICISF (1996), Tannenbaum and DeWolfe (2000), Levin (1989), and Stamm (1995) all acknowledge similar human reactions. Most individuals mentally review the

traumatic event through fantasies, dreams, or nightmares. This is when they are most in need of sharing their stories with a trusted individual who truly listens with unconditional acceptance. Self-blaming is a common reaction and often their judgements regarding their behavior preceding and following the event, as well as the event itself, have unrealistic perceptions and expectations. Again, an authentic listener can help to put such beliefs in perspective. Self-esteem can be placed at serious risk if individuals are allowed to continue with self-blame.

Many individuals will experience some form of depression (Montgomery & Morris, 1989). This is often due to an inability to express anger as a result of their experiences. The flip side of this is expressing anger at illogical targets such as loved ones. Probably the most serious challenge after a crisis is the consideration of belief systems. Most people believe that there is order to the universe--"if we are good and try to do the 'right' thing, life will be fair to us." Violent experiences (especially crimes upon a person) contradict this belief and victims mentally review all aspects of the crisis event in an attempt to get this belief back. It is imperative that we re-establish the illusion of an ordered existence in which we have some control in our lives because most of us could not function in a world in which we believed chaos reigned (Montgomery & Morris, 1989; Stamm, 1995, Tannenbaum & DeWolfe, 2000).

### Resolution

The third phase in the cycle is called resolution and it is here that victims try to put the crisis into perspective so they can move forward with their lives. This entails reflecting on the crisis, trying to make sense of it and what it means to them, and in the process

acknowledging three basic truths that are usually denied or ignored by human beings: (1) life events can occur at random, (2) each of us is vulnerable, and (3) death is inevitable. Montgomery and Morris (1989) refer to this process as *laying to rest* and suggest the victim must accept that life has changed because of the crisis, put this into perspective in terms of one's own life and belief system, and then reintegrate this knowledge or experience into a changed self in order to participate fully in one's future.

This is an important stage as victimization or trauma of any sort involves many losses. Courtois (1988) states that one often feels a loss of: control, a sense of safety in the world, a sense of possibilities, and of the self as it was before the event. In fact, Bard and Sangrey (1986) suggest that individuals may describe themselves as *altered* and think in terms of pre- and post- crisis event.

While most people go through a similar healing process, they do react in a variety of ways to the crisis event. Levin (1989) suggests that there is a wide range of normal responses that can be experienced by people involved in trauma first-hand and also by those who have either witnessed, heard about or have had different kinds of involvement with the person(s) immediately affected. Some may respond immediately after a trauma while others may have delayed reactions. Some may have adverse effects for a long period of time while others recover quite quickly. Most importantly, reactions can change over time. Some, for example, are initially energized by trauma and the challenge of coping only to become depressed at a later date. It should be noted that even after the final resolution, victims may experience unresolved, uncomfortable or *bad* feelings years after the actual crisis event.

Some specific reactions that can be expected in the aftermath of a crisis are delineated by the American Psychological Association (no date) and supported by several authorities including Montgomery and Morris (1989), Mitchell (1983), Raphael (1994), ICISF (1996), and Figley (1985). Feelings usually become intense and unpredictable which results in mood changes, irritability, anxiety, nervousness, and depression. One's thoughts and behavior patterns are affected and this may be realized in repeated and vivid memories of the event (sometimes referred to as flashbacks) as well as difficulties in concentrating, decision-making and appetite and sleep disturbances. One may experience recurring emotional reactions on the anniversary of the event and at any reminders of the event (sirens, storms, strangers approaching in the dark, etc.). These reminders are referred to as *triggers* and may be accompanied by fears the stressful event will be repeated. Other very typical emotional reactions as suggested by Levin (1989) include shock, disbelief, disorientation, denial, hyper-alertness, restlessness, outbursts of anger or rage, worrying, ruminating, feelings of helplessness, panic, feeling out of control, minimizing the experience, avoiding anything associated with the trauma, and survivor guilt.

One can expect that interpersonal relationships may become strained. For a time, survivors may have more conflict than usual with family, friends, and co-workers. If left unresolved, the conflict could result in complete breaks in relationships. As well, physical symptoms that are known to accompany extreme stress may arise such as headaches, backaches, changes in sleep and appetite patterns, interest in sex, bowel habits, nausea, chest pain, heart palpitations, sudden sweating, easily startled by noises or unexpected touch, more susceptible to colds and illnesses, etc. and pre-existing medical conditions

may worsen due to stress.

Montgomery and Morris (1989) state that the severity of a victim's reaction to severe crisis is influenced by as many as five factors depending on the nature of the trauma. The first factor, for both personal and large-scale disasters, is that the degree of intensity and loss has an impact on a victim's reaction. Generally, events that last longer and pose a greater threat as well as a loss of life or substantial loss of property are determining factors. In a personal attack, the degree to which the body was violated is also influential in a victim's reaction. In the example of the Pine Lake Tornado, property loss on behalf of the campers was seen by the public to be fairly minimal as the campers still had their permanent homes to return to. Unfortunately, support in coping under such a perception is often minimal due to the *perceived* limited loss.

The extent to which the victim feared being killed is a second factor influencing the victim's reaction with a genuine belief that one would not survive the crisis resulting in the most severe reaction (Montgomery & Morris, 1989). For those victims who experienced a personal attack of some sort, it is the third factor, the relationship between the victim and the attacker that determines the reaction. If one experiences severe distress at the hands of a known *attacker*, a violation of trust is involved and reactions will be more severe. In a similar vein, the fourth factor is the location of the incident. It is much more traumatic if the incident occurs in a place where the victim feels safe and secure.

The fifth, and most important, factor is based on the victim's past experiences and coping skills. The American Psychological Association (no date) suggest that, in general, an individual who has been faced with other emotionally challenging situations (such as

long-term health problems, family-related difficulties, job loss, etc.) may have more intense reactions and need more time to recover. However, it also states that a person's general ability to cope with emotionally challenging situations may develop and enhance one's ability to cope with stressful situations encountered in the future.

Mitchell (1993) states that these reactions, if left unmanaged, lead to traumatic stress. This can be visibly recognized by deterioration in job performance, personality changes, anxiety states, relationship discord and conflict, grief reactions, depression, and sometimes, thoughts of suicide. Employees with unmanaged reactions to traumatic stress are discouraged staff who feel neglected and often present with low morale, may make significant errors, and are at risk of leaving the profession or occupation much earlier than otherwise planned. Obviously, unrecognized or unprocessed crisis stress reactions take their toll on traumatized human beings. So how does one cope or assist individuals in coping?

Hans Selye, Nobel Prize winner and inventor of the word *stress* is quoted in the Los Angeles Times (April 11, 1985) as saying that complete freedom from stress is death. He suggests that there are two roads to survival of stress. The first is fight or adaptation and the second is flight or living in fear. Selye, as well as most other researchers and therapists familiar with this area of knowledge, suggests adaptation as being the more successful strategy. Littauer (1985) agrees with her added wisdom that, "the secret to life is the successful adjustment to ever-changing stress" (p. 104).

Researchers have found that intense and constant anger, fear, frustration, or worry that is bottled up inside can result in a build-up of emotional stress. Without release, this

can cause tension which may threaten health and lead to illness (Banks, 1982; Fishkin, 1994; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Luban, 1995). If left to fester and grow, stress can cause a litany of health problems including depression, heart disease, asthma, diabetes, lower back pain, skin rashes, digestive problems, allergies, and mental illness. It can also lead to an increase in accidents and substance abuse (Mitchell, no date).

### Coping with Trauma

Coping with stress is another matter. The irony of the situation is that, while most individuals know a variety of coping mechanisms, few act upon them. Many people get by in this manner in their day-to-day lives but when tragedy occurs, most need structured, and often, external assistance to aid in regaining equilibrium.

Virtually all persons familiar with the field of critical incident stress as well as stress resulting from less traumatic incidents recognize that early intervention is most beneficial and the longer one delays assistance, the more likely the development of long-term problems (Mitchell, no date; Montgomery and Morris, 1989; ICISF, 1996; Everly and Mitchell, 1992; Mitchell and Resnik, 1981; Levin, 1989; Courtois, 1985; Scurfield, 1985; Figley, 1985; and Raphael, 1994). Pre-incident traumatic stress education is considered an essential element in preventing and reducing critical incident stress. Mitchell, (no date) has discovered through follow-up reports of a considerable number of businesses related to assisting people in need that staff members who are forewarned about stress reactions and given support from co-workers, supervisors, and administration tend to recognize signs of distress earlier. This leads to taking preventative measures or requesting assistance earlier resulting in less damage done, less time off work, and morale

remaining elevated.

### Debriefing Process

According to the ICISF workshop manual (1996), the debriefing process can occur at four points. The first is On-Scene or Near-Scene and entails talking with personnel during breaks to provide emotional support by listening and showing acceptance of their stress reactions. This can be done effectively one-on-one and with small groups.

Initial Debriefings occur within a few hours after the incident. These are considered to be short versions of formal debriefings, are most frequently employed in the work place, and take between twenty and forty-five minutes. Defusings are more informal and are usually led by peer-support personnel. (Peer-support personnel are employees or individuals who understand and have experienced the role of the workers involved in the incident but were not actually a part of the traumatic event. An example for a Fire Department debriefing would be a fire fighter who was off duty at the time of the crisis.)

These mini-debriefings are similar to a conversation about a particularly distressing event and consist of an introductory phase, a second phase that allows for exploration of the incident, and concludes with helpful suggestions designed to protect staff against further harmful effects of the incident. If conducted in a supportive environment with no criticisms, a defusing provides an opportunity for workers to talk about their feelings and reactions in a semi-structured way.

The Formal Debriefing is discussed in the following section (*Critical Incident Stress Debriefing*) and the final consideration is a Follow-Up Debriefing. If needed, this occurs several weeks or months after the crisis and is used to tackle any unresolved issues.

### Critical Incident Stress Debriefings and Defusings

Critical Incident Stress Debriefings and Defusings are multi focal or comprehensive, structured processes that rely on group dynamics and are designed as an intervention technique for those who have experienced or are currently experiencing critical incident stress. The two most important goals of CISD are to (1) protect and support the personnel involved in a traumatic incident and (2) avoid abnormal and exaggerated stress responses. To be most beneficial, a debriefing or defusing should be employed within the first forty-eight hours following a crisis. Debriefings are led by personnel trained in the process and may involve mental health officers as well as peer support members.

A formal Critical Incident Stress Debriefing occurs between twenty-four and forty-eight hours after an incident and takes approximately two hours from start to finish.

It consists of seven phases:

- An Introductory Phase is used to introduce the process and set the guidelines for the meeting.
- The Fact Phase requires the participants to describe the traumatic event from each individual's perspective on a cognitive level.
- The Thought Phase asks the question, "What was the first thought that came into your head?" and is designed to move the participants from a cognitive state to emotional reactions.
- The Reaction Phase is used to identify the most traumatic aspect of the incident for each individual and employs the question, "What was the

hardest part of this incident for you?”

- The Symptoms Phase asks, “What symptoms did you experience?” and transitions participants from an emotional back to a cognitive state.
- The sixth phase is the Teaching Phase and is used to educate participants as to normal reactions and adaptive coping mechanisms. Often peers are asked to offer strategies they have used. This phase provides and solidifies a cognitive anchor for participants.
- Finally, members reach the Re-Entry Phase which clarifies ambiguities, ensures the transition to the cognitive domain has occurred, and prepares for ending the session (Mitchell and Everly, 1992; ICISF, 1996).

It should be noted that a debriefing takes the participant from a cognitive state, down into his/her emotions, and then returns them to a cognitive state. Everly and Mitchell (1992), Montgomery and Morris (1989), and Mitchell and Resnik (1993) remind us of the importance of not going into feelings so deeply as to almost re-live the crisis event. This can be extremely harmful to participants as it adds a second traumatic experience. Since a debriefing involves an entire group (and often an occupational group such as police officers, fire fighters, paramedics, medical personnel, teachers, volunteer agencies, etc.), the benefits of participating can be to experience relief and support, a contribution to overall group morale, and the opportunity for normalization. The nature of group processes allows each participant to recognize that the thoughts and feelings each are currently experiencing are common to the group. Recognizing that one’s feelings are *normal* provides a degree of comfort to most participants.

The CISD process is designed for use on groups of individuals severely traumatized due to small-scale and large-scale disasters. Since all except On-Scene and Near-Scene defusings rely on the group process structure, debriefings are best employed for groups as opposed to individuals. Any individuals needing more intensive assistance after participating in a group debriefing are recommended for one-to-one counselling with a counsellor or psychologist.

Debriefing and defusing interventions are effective because both are based on a comprehensive approach that includes basic and continuing education programs with the understanding that “knowledge is power” (Mitchell, no date; Mitchell, 1983; ICISF, 1996). Well-trained critical incident stress teams conduct the process which allows for clear boundaries between those who give and receive help thus alleviating additional emotional distress. It has been found that when fellow co-workers, supervisors or administrators conduct the process, unnecessary anxieties are caused for the individuals in crisis and the results are far less effective. Numerous support programs are available for peers, families, etc. and a wide range of flexible intervention techniques are employed (Mitchell, no date).

The format itself insists upon early intervention which most researchers including Montgomery and Morris (1989), Courtois (1985), Everly and Mitchell (1992), Littauer (1985), Scurfield (1985), Levin (1989), and Figley (1985) deem a necessity for optimal healing. Being a safe, supportive, structured environment allows individuals to vent their emotions thus providing an opportunity for catharsis. By verbally reconstructing and expressing specific traumas, fears, and regrets, individuals are able to verbalize their

trauma. van der Hart, Brown, and van der Kolk (1989) noted that the successful treatment of post traumatic reactions was largely based upon the victim's ability to not just express feelings but also to *reconstruct* and *integrate* the trauma verbally. Verbal catharsis allows reduced stress, reduced strain on the mechanisms employed to keep the body in balance, a reduced tendency to ruminate or obsess, and an increased likelihood that one will *make sense* of the trauma.

The process itself is based on a finite structure that is in complete opposition to the often chaotic, traumatic event. Borkovec, Wilkenson, Folenstee, and Lerman (1983) found that providing a structured environment within which to worry reduced the tendency of worry to interfere with other activities. Littauer (1985) states that a "critical part of coping with stress is being organized" (p. 111).

The value of group and peer support is well documented. Numerous healing factors are intrinsic to the group itself. Yalom (1985), Littauer (1985), Courtois (1988) and Everly and Mitchell (1992) are in agreement that there can be an exchange of useful constructive information, catharsis, an understanding that others are experiencing the same or similar feelings, a modeling of constructive coping behavior, a group sense of caring and support, an opportunity to help oneself by helping others, and a generation of feelings of hope. Finally, debriefings and defusings allow for follow-up to maximize recovery potential.

While debriefings and defusings do centre around a structured group model, there is an element of individual responsibility once the process is complete. Part of the educational component considers personal stress management and coping techniques

individuals may engage in within their own lives. These suggestions are of particular importance to those experiencing personal disasters or life crises as well as people in stress-filled lives because the individuality of their situation is not conducive to the CISD format. Unless they choose to join a psychotherapy or support group of some sort, such individuals are in need of coping mechanisms as well.

Most suggestions or strategies for handling stress are basic and familiar. Stamm (1995) suggests that in dealing with vicarious trauma one should employ typical stress management and relaxation techniques to counteract exposure to images or stories gathered in the process of dealing with victims. For any unresolved emotional issues that relate to the suffering seen, one should be aware of one's own personal vulnerabilities and any unresolved upsetting issues in one's life and refer such individuals or incidents to a colleague.

Montgomery and Morris (1989), Littauer (1985), and Mitchell (no date) suggest there are three basic ingredients of a successful recovery. One must accept that one's stress reactions during and after the crisis are normal. Managing and expressing one's feelings constructively is crucial. Finally, one must come to terms with what the experience has meant and how it has changed them.

A general coping plan outlined by most writers in the field can be grouped into seven basic strategies:

(1) *Understand and accept the stress reactions as normal.* Montgomery and Morris

(1989) state that, "the specific emotions you experience will reflect the nature of the crisis, your perceptions of it, your psychological makeup, and your immediate

situation” (p. 120). Each individual should understand that it would be abnormal *not* to have these reactions.

- (2) *Share one’s feelings constructively.* It is imperative that each individual involved in trauma find at least one other trusted person to listen to one’s story and feelings as many times as necessary. As mentioned previously, sharing one’s story provides a tremendous opportunity for verbal catharsis.
- (3) *Get one’s life organized again.* A major effect of crisis is disorganization. Crisis disrupts one’s usual living routines and it is important to take these routines back or initiate new ones. For long-term or on-going crises, one may find a continual disruption of living routines which can add considerable stress and reduce one’s ability to cope. Trying to follow routines as much as possible in such situations is effective.
- (4) *Find and use helpful external resources.* As suggested previously, these could include family or friends who are willing to listen to one’s feelings and reactions and show they accept the normality of what is being described. (Montgomery and Morris, 1989, p. 123). Community organizations can also be of assistance.
- (5) *Use of medical prescriptions (drugs) should be used as a temporary aid,* if at all (Montgomery & Morris, 1989).
- (6) *Manage any physical reactions such as depression, guilt, anger, mood swings, and sleep problems.* Several researchers suggest that one should realize such reactions are normal, accept them as a temporary part of one’s life, and gradually work through them.

(7) *Eventually come to terms with the crisis and “lay it to rest”*. This may entail spending a considerable amount of time reviewing the experience and trying to make sense of it. Often there may be nothing rational about the crisis and this can be difficult to accept. If there were possible or definite factors that one engaged (or did not engage) in that contributed to the crisis, one can resolve to do things different in the future and reduce the possibility of being a crisis victim again. Many victims find they have to accept that, because they are mortal they are vulnerable, and that luck plays a role in our lives. Some individuals discover, return to, or abandon religion after a crisis experience. Ultimately, one must try to accept the changes in oneself brought on by the crisis.

While generalized coping strategies offer traumatized individuals a starting point for taking care of themselves, most are discussed in such broad terms that individuals rarely actively employ them. Often humans rely on past coping mechanisms, whether or not they were effective or successful, and muddle through.

Levin (1989) offers more specific strategies such as: mobilizing a support system, talking about the incident, crying, strenuous aerobic activity (such as jogging, biking, and walking), meditation, humor, prayer, hot baths, music, art, eating a balanced diet, getting adequate sleep, avoiding stimulants, hugging (releases endogenous opioids--the body's natural pain killer), eating warm foods that activate tryptophan to help you feel tired but good (such as turkey, baked potatoes, boiled onions, cream-based soups), journaling, and taking a proactive response toward both personal and community safety.

I find it interesting that, in light of the previous discussion on hope, many coping

strategies suggested appear to fit under one of the four components believed to be hope-enhancing. To review briefly, these were: *self* (referring to those strategies one must do for oneself because no one else can provide us with them and include such things as meaning or purpose in life, sense of control or personal competence, self-confidence, and maturity), *cognitive processes* (referring to the thoughts and amount of knowledge/education one has regarding one's situation because one's thoughts influence one's perception which forms our realities), *relationships*, and *spiritual*. It seems that many of the suggestions for coping also seem to be hope-enhancing.

A difficulty with the various strategies suggested by many researchers is, as previously noted, many individuals do not act on them. Humans all lead busy lives and often find it extremely difficult to fit a new *habit* into an already seemingly full day. As found with any broken or discarded New Year's Resolution, just having information is not enough. People have to make life-style changes in order to incorporate new habits into their lives.

Loma Linda Medical Centre recognizes this and has developed successful stress management and life-style change programs. All have a spiritual emphasis and are based on the belief that to change, people need something external or outside of the self. Littauer (1985) says that Loma Linda's programs "help people change their approaches, attitudes, and behavior patterns" (p. 105) to facilitate and maintain life-style changes. This may be the secret to stress management and coping strategies as well. Whether the crisis has been sudden and large-scale or on-going and personal, Levin (1989) suggests that one's reactions to it usually last much longer than expected (i.e. it can take years to regain

one's equilibrium) and it only makes sense that management techniques need to be incorporated as a life-style choice as opposed to a temporary aid.

Mitchell (no date), Everly and Mitchell (1992), Montgomery and Morris (1989), Courtois (1988) and numerous other researchers strongly suggest that if assistance to a traumatized individual is limited, delayed, or non-existent, that individual may be at risk for developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Figley (1985), Mitchell (no date), Levin (1989) and Stamm (1995) define it as "a pattern of cognitive, physical, emotional, and behavioral responses to an ordeal so extremely severe as to be considered outside the realm of ordinary human experience" (Mitchell, p. 6). Mitchell (no date), Courtois (1988), Montgomery and Morris (1989), Tannenbaum and DeWolfe (2000), and the DSM-III-R suggest PTSD is characterized by:

a heightened state of arousal and anxiety, an excessive startle reaction, a tendency to re-experience the trauma when similar stimuli are presented in the environment, avoidance behaviors, significant depression, memory disturbances, psychic numbing, flashbacks and a variety of notable cognitive, physical, emotional, and behavioral reactions generated by the traumatic experience. (Mitchell, p. 6)

their reactions and complicate their conditions by neglecting themselves. As noted on pages 46 and 47 of this document, the byproducts of suppressing normal human emotions include eventual emotional breakdowns, job dysfunction, changes in one's personality, deterioration of health, depression, premature departure from one's profession, suicides, and increased use of drugs and alcohol. Other reasons PTSD may develop are because individuals may refuse assistance completely as they may view seeking help as a sign of weakness or professional incompetency. As well, they may be unaware of the tremendous

impact the event had on them or may not receive competent help (Banks, 1982; Bard & Sangrey, 1986; Bloomfield & McWilliams, 1997; Everly & Mitchell, 1992; Figley, 1985).

Everly and Mitchell (1992) suggest that, for those in high-risk professions, any single traumatic incident could lead to symptoms of post traumatic stress or fully developed PTSD. In addition, Stamm (1995) has found that individuals exposed to violations by people or institutions they must depend on or trust also show PTSD-like symptoms even if the abuse was not directly life threatening. In addition, she states that the risk for PTSD increases with exposure to trauma with multiple or chronic incidents more difficult to overcome than most single occurrences. Stamm supports this claim with research statistics indicating that the incidence of PTSD in the general United States population is 1%. Compared with this is a 20% incident rate in wounded combat veterans and a 23% rate in young adults living in the inner city. She then associates incidents of individuals exposed to violations of commission or omission by people and institutions with a fairly recent type of severe stress diagnosed as DESNOS (Disorders of Extreme Stress, Not Otherwise Specified). While this may be more frequently found in individuals who have unresolved childhood traumatic experiences and then experience subsequent adult traumas, it appears to be due to how individuals deal with or express stress and their individual interpretation of the stress or crisis event.

It seems that PTSD is the most severe and incapacitating form of stress-related disorders to the extent that it is capable of ending a victim's functional life and the life of the victim's family. Because the risk of being a victim of PTSD is mostly a function of being in a potentially traumatizing situation or experience, it seems obvious that

intervention efforts should be undertaken by such high-risk businesses and directed at preventative education of such syndromes. Certainly CISD and traumatic stress defusings have a history of being used as a formalized intervention throughout the world (Everly and Mitchell, 1992).

In light of the preceding discussion, it seems obvious that there is a need for structured crisis intervention for any individual or group involved in, what they perceive to be, a traumatic event. This must be an integral part of society. By this I mean, each individual should be as aware of the need to access coping assistance following a personal life crisis as he/she is in seeking medical assistance for a broken bone. Society itself must be educated in viewing the need for psychological support as genuine and necessary. This must be the responsibility of employers, each branch of the healing profession, health benefit plans, insurance companies, and the public in general. It is only when each member of society takes responsibility for their role in change that new thinking patterns and belief systems are established. Should this occur, future generations will be guaranteed needed intervention when in crisis.

## TEACHERS

Teaching has long been perceived by the general public as a *cushy* job. Great hours, good salary, excellent benefit package and pension, and lots of holidays. Because virtually everyone has been taught by a teacher in a school and is familiar with what the job *appears* to entail, teaching is considered to be easy because it *looks* easy.

In actual fact, Bonnie MacKay (1994), President of the Alberta Teacher's Association (ATA), insists that the profession is under unprecedented stress. Fraser (1998) and Riewe (1998) suggest the 1994 five percent rollback in education manufactured a crisis in the teaching system and resulted in an increase in individual problems for teachers. In fact, some teachers are finding themselves at the most significant and stressful crisis of their careers with their livelihood seemingly at risk and their hopes and dreams in danger of vanishing.

### Issues Facing Teachers

#### The Nature of the Teaching Act

There are a number of different kinds of issues facing teachers today. The first kind centers around the teaching act itself and consists of large class sizes, split classes, greater numbers of courses being offered, less preparation time, more accountability, legal and medical issues, having to defend professional decisions, overwork, and a lack of communication between teachers and administrators (as managers) (Riewe, 1998; Richmond, 1999; MacKay, 1994). Teachers regularly and, sometimes daily, face the frustrations of students who will not take responsibility for their learning, parents who are

not interested, and meeting Alberta Education's escalating, often unclear, and ever-changing expectations, which all adds up to more work in an already strained workload.

Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) suggest that teachers no longer teach homogenized classrooms. More diversity in schools demands flexibility. Properly accommodating many different cultures, languages, and learning styles means rethinking the very core of what one teaches and how one teaches it. Decentralization, a relatively new issue, also hinders teachers. This forces schools to become competitive for students which removes local professional support (for one another) from other schools and also alienates students.

#### Difficult Parents

A second issue facing teachers are difficult parents. Teachers with long, successful careers are experiencing pressure from parents with unreasonable expectations. In fact, Fraser (1998) suggests that a higher standard of behavior is expected of teachers but not of parents. The ATA and Alberta Education have mechanisms in place to police teachers but none are available to monitor the behavior of parents. A phenomenon that is becoming more common is parent harassment of teaching staff. Fraser (1998) defines harassment as a "persistent, unwarranted and/or unsubstantiated criticism of, or interference with, school programs, teacher's performances or interaction with students" (p. 31).

Reports from various administrators and teaching staff suggest that parental harassment can take many forms. Parents have been known to sit in teacher's classrooms, stand outside the classroom door listening, use intimidation tactics such as confronting a teacher in front of students and even becoming physical. Some parents have used political connections or their profession (i.e. lawyer, police officer) as leverage or as threats. There

have also been incidents of parents banding together in campaigns to get rid of teachers. Letter-writing campaigns and petitions appear to be the most common form and there have been several cases in which many parent participants had never even had a child taught by the teacher in question (MacKay, 1994; Fraser, 1998; Riewe, 1998). Teachers have the same rights as other citizens under the law and school administration must be well-versed in how to deal with such situations to avoid or alleviate placing additional stress on the teaching staff.

### Professional Relations

A third issue facing teachers involves professional relations. Significant pressure is placed on professional relations due to rising tensions in schools caused by inadequate staffing, reduced resources, increased expectations, insecure administrators, and unreasonable demands (Fraser, 1998; Riewe, 1998). Teachers appear to be making many personal sacrifices for their students often at the expense of their own lives and families (Richmond, 1999; Riewe, 1998).

Increasingly teachers are asked to be involved with, and meet the expectations of students, administrators, central office personnel, parents, and other members of society. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) believe that teachers all over the world are beleaguered. Richmond (1999) joins Hargreaves and Fullan in insisting that too much education reform and restructuring are destroying teacher's confidence, draining their energy, consuming a large portion of their time, and taking away their hope. Goodlad (1984) suggests that with the generally declining role of churches and families in educating children and youth, schools are playing an increasingly important role, especially for disadvantaged students

(p. vii).

MacKay (1998) suggests that since the five percent instructional grant cuts made in Alberta in 1994 have never been returned, teachers are placed in an unfair bargaining position for fair wage increases by appearing to take money from students' needs. She goes on to assert that teachers took the blame as our economy deteriorated and public education was seen as *not doing its job*. As well, some blame the education system and, therefore, teachers for the social deterioration of our society. Teachers are now expected to remediate social problems with few resources or funding (Richmond, 1999). MacKay suggests that by blaming the education system, the focus is no longer on poor government business deals, inadequate support for prevention programs, or the need to find real solutions. It is difficult to remain professional when one is constantly under siege.

#### School Administration

It seems with the introduction of site-based management that school administration has become a fourth issue that teachers must deal with. Fraser (1998) and Riewe (1998) report that, in the province of Alberta, there have been occasions in which the teacher evaluation process has been abused, teacher transfers have been used inappropriately, and contract terminations have been due to interpersonal relations difficulties rather than teacher competency. Riewe, a former high school principal and recent appointee to the Alberta Teacher's Association, states that it is becoming more frequent that administration "may become defensive and revert to a position of authority when teachers express concerns or do not meet expectations" (1998, p. 23). In fact, she stresses that some teachers are intimidated by, or even fearful of, their administrators. This is an important

issue because, as was discussed in the Crisis section of this document, negative tension induced by fear or apprehension creates stress, anxiety, sickness, and hostility.

### School Violence

A fifth issue teachers must face is a common problem in the United States that has become more prevalent in Canada in recent years. This is the issue of violence. Shen (1997) reports that the National Centre for Education Statistics of the United States Department of Education conducted a study of school problems. Every three years a representative sample of 50,000 public school teachers were asked to rate a given selection of problems as being serious, moderate, minor, or not at all. The selection of problems to be rated were: physical conflicts among students, robbery or theft, vandalism of school property, student use of alcohol, student drug abuse, student possession of weapons, and verbal abuse of teachers.

Results of the study indicated that drug and alcohol abuse are a serious problem in all schools (i.e. elementary and secondary; urban, suburban, and rural). Physical conflicts, robbery, weapons possession, vandalism, and verbal abuse of teachers are becoming more severe. Verbal abuse and physical conflict were viewed as threatening to teachers' safety because teachers have to break up such fights.

Even in Canada, we are experiencing growing violence in homes, schools, and on our streets. Suicide is currently the second leading cause of death among teens. To offset this violence, the burden seems to have been placed on the school system rather than society to teach our youth the need for greater acceptance, tolerance, and understanding of immigrants and refugees arriving in our province as well as the marginalized (MacKay,

1994).

The result of facing these issues day after day, year after year, is low staff morale, low self-esteem, and a loss of self-confidence on the part of many teachers. Riewe (1998) sums up the current situation of teachers in her statement,

I have been frustrated at the frequency with which teachers can have their self-esteem eroded and are forced to deal with and question core beliefs about their own abilities and competencies. Too often they have lost all confidence in their abilities, not only in teaching but in other aspects of their lives. They quickly succumb to self-doubt and quite often become ill. (p. 23)

## Teachers and Stress

It is both officially and publicly recognized that occupations involving front line assistance to those in need such as emergency service workers (police, fire fighters, paramedics), medical personnel, and similar community agencies are highly stressful and can put individuals at risk for experiencing secondary or vicarious trauma (NIOSH, no date). Structured programs such as CISD have been developed to provide immediate assistance to traumatized personnel and alleviate long-term emotional difficulties. These programs are being adopted and used by more and more organizations world wide because of their proven value. Even if individuals in crisis took no measures to counteract or diffuse stress in their personal lives, most would receive some catharsis just by virtue of participating in a group critical incident stress debriefing.

As well, individuals in such occupations are seen to be society's *knights in shining armour* in times of crises. They ride in and rescue us from danger. They are not seen as the reason for society's woes as seems to be the case for teachers. They are also not held responsible for alleviating or, *fixing* the myriad of problems found in our society. Publicly and officially recognized as being in stressful occupations as well as also being publicly and officially supported in times of distress lessens the stressful impact to some degree. Again, such is not the case for most teachers.

Victims or survivors involved in a traumatic crisis usually experience an acute form of stress. While humans all experience stressful moments every day that, if ignored, may build up over time, a sudden disaster or life crisis has an immediate, overwhelming impact on people's lives. This raises a red flag and individual's are forced to deal with the

accompanying stress as opposed to ignoring it.

The nature of the teaching profession incorporates a different kind of stress. Unless one encounters a violent incident, most teachers deal with a much more insidious kind of stress (NIOSH, no date) which, over a long period of time, can be equally as traumatic as the stress experienced by those involved in a disaster such as the Pine Lake Tornado.

This is stress that sneaks up and gradually accumulates because it is often seen as *part of the job* and, therefore, ignored or not dealt with appropriately. Richmond (1999) suggests these are things like behavior issues, teaching out of one's subject area, extra curricular pressures, children arriving at school hungry or abused, and lack of funding, resources, or supplies as well as the specific areas of concern listed earlier. Gradual accumulations of tiny stressors usually do not raise red flags until it is almost too late. Teachers are very busy people and most have their time accounted for even when they are not actually teaching students (Richmond, 1999). Supervision, extra curricular activities, committees, workshops and seminars, parent meetings, marking, and preparation for the next day's lessons leave little time for having a personal life. It is easy to see why taking time to care for self, while teachers know should be a high priority, is not actually acted upon. There is too much pressure to get all of the *have-to-do's* finished.

Finkelhore and Brown (1985) in their work with child sexual abuse and incest and Stamm (1995) in her work with secondary trauma have suggested some factors that seem to be most related to traumatic impact. Richmond (1999) and NIOSH (no date) suggest these same factors are also at work creating extremely stressful situations and, sometimes, environments for teachers as well. It would seem that research supports the concept that,

regardless of the *cause* of stress, human beings experience similar symptoms or reactions. “The response [to stress] is preprogrammed biologically. Everyone responds in much the same way, regardless of whether the stressful situation is at work or home” (NIOSH, no date, p. 8).

### Betrayal

The first factor is betrayal. Finkelhore and Brown define this as “the dynamic by which [one] discovers that someone on whom they were vitally dependent has caused them harm” (p. 531). Stamm expands this definition to include: individuals exposed to violations by people or *institutions* they must depend on or trust even if the abuse was not directly life threatening. Research findings documented by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) substantiate these findings (NIOSH, no date). Certainly teachers are dependent upon their administrators for employment and may find themselves in such a position for a variety of reasons. Administrators can use their power inappropriately and Alberta Learning as well as the Alberta Teacher’s Association are familiar with such situations.

Deals made with parents based on prestige, power, or money in which the teacher is not supported or honored is not a rarity in the school system. This seems to be especially true in small towns. As noted earlier, administrators have been known to use teacher evaluations, transfers, job assignments, and contract terminations inappropriately. This seems to be more common with the advent of site-based management.

### Powerlessness

Powerlessness is a second contributing factor to teacher stress. Finkelhore and

Brown (1985) refer to this as, “the dynamic of rendering the victim powerless . . . the process in which the [person’s] will, desires, and sense of efficacy are continually contravened” (p. 532). Downsizing, larger class sizes, split classes (and in some high schools as many as four levels of a Career and Technology Studies or core subject in one class), staff lay-offs due to budget cuts or low-enrollment--certainly these may cause one to feel powerless and held hostage in a situation; betrayed by those with decision-making power. As well, many decisions are made without consulting teachers and often, even when consulted, teacher’s wishes are ignored or disregarded. This is especially true when one considers the new mandates, curricula, and measures of accountability *handed down* by Alberta Learning. Janet Andruchow (Richmond, 1999), co-president of the London Home and School Associations states, “There have been too many changes too quickly and everybody is too worried about what’s going to happen. The changes aren’t bad in themselves, but the methods have been hard on teachers” (p. 2).

### Stigmatization

Finally, stigmatization has an impact on how teachers view and feel about themselves. Finkelhore and Brown define this as, “the negative connotations that are communicated to the [individual] around the experience and that then become incorporated into the [individual’s] self-image” (p. 532). Stamm (1995) also expresses this consideration in her work with victims of secondary trauma as does Richmond (1999) in his seven-part series on education. Certainly, when one refers back to the previous discussion on professionalism, one can see that teachers could feel quite stigmatized as a profession.

### Care and Respect

Another stress-contributing factor that can be personally diminishing is one of care and respect. I witnessed many supervisors or team leaders of various emergency services groups at the Pine Lake Tornado *taking care* of *their* people. These supervisors ensured *their* people had enough to eat and drink. They also took their employees home rather than force them to work when tired and cold. The concern was that tired people made mistakes and got hurt. These supervisors would much rather let their people rest and begin fresh in the morning than risk consequences.

How many school administrators have been known to tell overworked, exhausted teachers to go home at the end of the day rather than do the expected extra curricular activities? In fact, many school districts now have it written into the actual teacher contract the number of hours one must spend on extra curricular and supervisory activities. In schools, the motto seems to be “do more for, and with less.”

On days when county schools are cancelled for students due to inclement weather, all teachers are expected to be at work as usual by the appropriate starting time (or very close to it). Yet on these same days Nova Core, the Prentice Plant, and Union Carbide place an announcement on the radio for employees to stay home until noon when the roads would be safer to travel. These are employees who know they are valued, respected, and cared for by their employers. Surely teachers need to hear this message as well.

Nel Noddings (1992) in her text, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, states that “to care and be cared for are fundamental human needs. Individuals all need to be cared for by other human beings. (p. xi). She

perceives the word *care* to encompass the need to be understood, received, respected, and recognized and that the need for such caring in the present culture is acute. Noddings suggests all schools should have one main, overriding goal that guides the establishment and priority of all other goals. This main goal should be to promote the growth of students as healthy, competent, moral people. She believes this would produce “people [future citizens] who would live nonviolently with each other, sensitively and in harmony with the natural environment, reflectively and serenely with themselves” (p. 12). This seems to be an answer to society’s expectations that teachers remediate all wrongs. If society agrees with this, it must begin by treating its teachers in a similar manner.

Certainly the preceding factors have the potential of contributing to intense weariness and stress in teachers. Selye (1980) states that

after exhaustion from excessively stressful activity, sleep and rest can restore resistance and adaptability *almost* to previous levels, but the emphasis here is on the word, ‘almost’. It would seem that, just as any machine eventually wears out even if it has enough fuel, so the human body sooner or later becomes the victim of intense and unremitting vital activity. (p. 3)

Littauer (1985), Courtois (1988), and Kabat-Zinn (1990) suggest that stress leading to or resulting in emotional instability can be caused by any of the present stressors in one’s life as well as any of the past situations that were not dealt with at the time. Weekes (1987) supports this in her understanding that sometimes the symptoms of nervousness are not about one’s present mood. The body may still be registering the tense, frightened mood of the preceding weeks, months, or years. This is what makes stress, anxiety, and depression so puzzling and why it takes so long to heal.

Granted, the teaching profession has its share of stress which, for some individuals, can be very debilitating. The question then becomes, “Why do some teachers crumble under the stress while others seem to be relatively unaffected?” While there are many, many considerations and answers to this question, a crucial clue offered by NIOSH (no date), Weekes (1972), Viscott (1992), and Fishkin (1994) seems to be embedded in one’s personality style and coping mechanisms.

. . . NIOSH favours the view that working conditions play a primary role in causing job stress. However, the role of individual factors is not ignored. Exposure to stressful working conditions (called job stressors) can have a direct influence on worker safety and health. Individual and other situational factors can intervene to strengthen or weaken this influence. (NIOSH, no date, p. 5)

## The Nature of Stress

Weekes (1972) suggests that stress is the pressure of an unexpected feeling. Stress is any demand made upon us--internally, externally, or both and exists all around us. Many people suffer unresolved concerns regarding their self-esteem, relationships, children, work, parents, finances, failures, self-doubt, and are also bombarded with bad news from the outside world. Weekes (1987) insists that much of our stress comes from real or imagined threats to our social status, ego, strongly held beliefs, desire to control things, and our need to have things a certain way, namely, *our way*.

Many people do not express their fears and concerns which then accumulate over a period of time resulting in *psychological aging* (Weekes, 1972). Psychological aging is the main underlying cause of rigidity, depression, and irritability as one gets older. These unexpressed feelings and hurts build up causing stress and can result in depression. Often a cycle is established in which one feels hurt because one has been hurt but holds in his/her feelings; this hurt turns to anger; unexpressed anger results in guilt that erodes away the foundations of self-worth; and the energy used to re-direct the anger inward uses up one's emotional reserves resulting in depression (Weekes, 1972; Viscott, 1992; and Fishkin, 1994). An individual caught in this cycle not only accumulates the daily insults that everyone suffers, but also has a long history of holding in negative feelings whenever they occur.

Gerzon (1997) believes that negative feelings and negative inner or *self* talk have an instantaneous effect on every cell in one's body. Not only do they drain one's energy, but they also produce biochemical states of anxiety, depression, and fatigue. Bloomfield

and Cooper (1995) suggest that negative stress is the most debilitating of all. When one feels a sense of frustration or helplessness, then one is more likely to see oneself as a victim of circumstances. This can become paralyzing and may cause one to give up. Positive thoughts, in contrast, create feelings of health and well-being.

Unexpressed feelings, unresolved issues, fear, and negative self-talk cause an emotional pain that many researchers believe to be far more debilitating than physical pain (Thorne and Rothstein, 1993; Weekes, 1987; Banks, 1982). This emotional pain takes many forms with some of the most common being self-condemnation, anxiety, worry, fear, terror, and anxiety. Naturally, such feelings result in a build-up of even more stress.

Human beings also seem to live in a society that is constantly demanding. Bloomfield and Cooper (1995) suggest that many people feel there is not enough time in the day. These people constantly *push* themselves to fit everything in. They impatiently try to accomplish more and more objectives with no *down* time. The human body is not well-suited to a time struggle and may respond with a relatively new phenomenon called, *hurry sickness*. This can result in the causation of stress and tension leading to depression and burnout. It is important to note that a common result of tension and fatigue is that problems appear magnified. This can be a contributing factor to one's level of stress.

Very specific physiological reactions occur in a body under constant, unresolved stress. All human beings have an automatic protection device built into their bodies that has been present since the beginning of man. Researchers refer to this as the "fight or flight" response. When faced with a frightening situation, people's bodies release adrenaline which provides us with the stimulation to either flee the situation or stay and

*fight*. This automatic response worked well for those having to face wild animals and kill their food. It also assists people today in dangerous or *crisis* situations.

For some, however, this protection device gets stuck. The human body seems to be *hyper-sensitive* to real or imagined threats. Gerzon (1997), Weekes (1987, 1972) and NIOSH (no date) suggest that nerves become conditioned to react to any perceived threat in an exaggerated way. This results in common responses to stress being experienced far more strongly than usual. After a while, seemingly insignificant stressors result in the experience of overwhelming reactions which may include: muscle tension, elevated heart rate, feeling shaky inside, *butterflies* in the stomach, heart palpitations, sweaty hands, anger, hurt, feeling threatened, fearful, or resentful, rising blood pressure, heart pounding, etc. Bloomfield and Cooper (1995), Weekes (1987) and Remen (1996) refer to this phenomenon as individuals *overly sensitized* to stress.

Weekes (1987) and Bloomfield and Cooper (1995) suggest that if each situation encountered daily is responded to with a mini or larger hyper-arousal state, then the person will be very tense by the end of the day. If this becomes a way of life and one fails to develop a healthy way of releasing built-up tension, then over a period of months and years one may drift into a perpetual state of chronic hyper-arousal. Gerzon (1997) believes fear and bewilderment keep sensitization alive. When stressors associated with daily life become overwhelming and one's previously effective (or ineffective) coping processes no longer work, one's internal or automatic defence systems break down. Constant exposure to stressors and long periods of time spent in the *fight or flight* state can result in exhaustion and physical deterioration. This can lead to high blood pressure, cardiac

arrhythmias, digestive problems, chronic headaches, backaches, sleep disorders, and psychological distress such as chronic anxiety. At this point society tends to see a physical breakdown and a depletion of psychological resources often resulting in *burnout*.

Fishkin (1994), Kabat-Zinn (1990), Banks (1982), Weekes (1972), and Gerzon (1997) define burnout as a state of near or total psychological exhaustion with an accompanying loss of drive and enthusiasm for the details of one's life. Weekes suggests it is characterized by exhaustion, depression, seeing little meaning or purpose in life, an inability to cope with stressful life events, hyper-vigilance, an "uptight" feeling, impatience, irritability, and difficulty concentrating and sleeping. In this state one feels alienated from work, family, friends, and nothing seems meaningful anymore. This can lead to depression which explains why burnout often seems to be accompanied by a serious depression.

When one reflects back to the effects of a large-scale or personal/life crisis on an individual, one can see they are basically the same as those experienced from a build-up of daily stressors over a long period of time. While the situation(s) causing the stress and the time span involved may vary, the physical and emotional reactions of a human being are surprisingly similar.

People most susceptible to burnout also have factors in common to those most at risk for developing post traumatic stress disorders. Luban (1995) states that these are individuals who approach their career as a calling. Fishkin (1994), Adams and Mylander (1993), and Banks (1982) suggest they tend to identify too strongly with work. Often such individuals derive their own self-definition from their occupation. More time is given to

work than other aspects of their lives with the result that these people have no clear self-concept apart from work. This can lead to a loss of a sense of *I-ness*. Work becomes the organizing structure of their lives and becomes their sole sense of self-worth. Thus difficulties arising at work create a negative impact on their self-concept.

Luban (1995) suggests that often individuals with a *Type A* personality (strivers with seemingly ceaseless energy, creativity, dedication, and commitment) are more prone to burnout. These people are usually bright, talented, charismatic, and compassionate. As they try to deal with the daily pressures, internal pressure continues to increase causing anxiety levels to build. Coping mechanisms can no longer hold back their feelings of fear and despair. This causes internal pressures to mount and they may begin to become more dissatisfied with life. They begin to question the meaning and purpose of their lives. Finding no clear answers, this may result in their losing all interest in improving their ability to cope and they may give up entirely. A common reaction is to withdraw or escape. At this point the stress has become overwhelming and these individuals may experience profound feelings of helplessness and hopelessness leading to psychological and emotional paralysis (Banks, 1982; Fishkin, 1994; Adams & Mylander, 1993; Luban, 1995).

Psychologically, individuals in this state may experience some or all of the following symptoms: inability to do anything that is not absolutely necessary; no patience for dealing with complications, hassles, or uncertainties; difficulty trusting others; virtually impossible to visualize positive solutions to problems; view future as unpredictable and threatening; and feel a sense of disbelief that this experience is happening to them (Banks,

1982; Weekes, 1987).

Most authors are in agreement regarding Bloomfield and Cooper's (1995) statement that it is how one responds to the *small things* such as broken appointments, bad weather, traffic, etc. that is a far more powerful predictor of psychological and physical health than one's reaction to a major life crisis. Many people waste enormous amounts of energy reacting automatically and unconsciously to even minor delays.

There are both healthy and destructive strategies for coping with a build-up of accumulated stress. It is important to consider both, as often individuals do not recognize the harmful things they do to themselves. Self-destructive coping strategies include denial, filling up one's time with busyness so there is no time for oneself, over-eating, substance dependency, and so on. Again, these are similar to the negative coping mechanisms for those involved in a disaster or life crisis.

There are general strategies suggested for coping with depression, stress, a sensitized personality, and burnout. While there are some commonalities, there are also some specific differences. The literature seems to suggest that since all forms of stress are interrelated on some level, one would most likely find success by choosing a well-rounded approach to healing with a focus on those mechanisms that work best for the individual.

Bloomfield and McWilliams (1997) suggest that for those experiencing depression, the body is experiencing the depression at a cellular level. To combat this, these researchers/psychologists suggest that depressed people increase their energy level and an excellent way to do this is through play. Play is a powerful way to break up a cycle of hopelessness and increase energy levels. While learning to play alone is important, it is also

crucial to incorporate some play time with friends and loved ones in one's life. If an aspect of one's life is overcommitment, one should prioritize the various tasks and then do only those assigned top priority and forget the rest. This allows more time for oneself and the things one enjoys doing. Finally, in keeping with an old Alcoholics Anonymous saying and the beliefs of Oprah Winfrey, talk show diva, Bloomfield and McWilliams suggest the development of an attitude of gratitude. This keeps one focussed on the positive aspects of life rather than on what is *wrong*.

Suggestions for positive management of stress come from Banks (1982), Weekes (1987, 1972), and Gerzon (1997). These authors believe the secret is to reinforce one's inner stability to such an extent that one is able to face all problems in a healthy manner. Banks suggests that the "greatest cancer to personality is the inferiority complex" (p. 12). Therefore one must learn to believe in oneself which leads to a feeling of self-confidence. Unfortunately, there were no specific strategies suggested for how one might achieve this. Nor were there actual steps given for the suggestion of avoiding anxiety and fear. These authors believe that it is one's irrational thinking that causes such feelings. Fear of the unknown causes a tremendous worry in many people. Worry becomes a bad habit and is energy draining. Banks states that, "every person who has a nervous breakdown is a frightened person. Fear tortures the mind; it can kill your appetite; destroy your health; and ruin your life" (p. 14). Therefore one should replace negative thoughts with happy, positive ones. This, of course, is easier said than done.

Another suggestion Banks (1982), Adams and Mylander (1993) and Weekes (1987) have is to live in the present moment and enjoy oneself. Refrain from putting off

visiting with a friend, going for a walk, playing with children or pets, working on a creative project, going on a vacation *until* . . .--the kids are grown, the house is paid for, the yard work is done, etc. This includes learning to play again and laughter. Banks states that, “a human being cannot live without laughter. Laughter is God’s antidote for sadness” (p. 17).

Finally, these authors suggest that it is not *what* happens to you but *how* you choose to deal with it that matters. They suggest people overwhelmed by stress take time out for hobbies and other interests, to remember to look at situations differently, try not to lose perspective, and change inner self-talk from negative to positive. These are hints for taking care of ourselves which is something many individuals have not been very good at in the past.

For overly sensitized individuals Bloomfield and Cooper (1995), Weekes (1987), and Remen (1996) insist that the habit of fear must be cured. While one cannot totally eliminate nervous or stress symptoms (they are normal reactions to people’s responses in life), one can reduce them to a more manageable frequency and intensity. They suggest that one must see stress responses as a normal reaction that everyone experiences; discuss one’s feelings with someone who can assist in viewing fears from a different, and more realistic, perspective; accept the fear without fighting against it; and surrender to the experience. As one *gets out of the way*, the body will heal itself. These authors suggest the cure lies in being *willing* to cope with the fear, anxiety, and panic.

Solutions for burnout are offered by Banks (1982), Weekes (1987), Luban (1995), and Fishkin (1994). These authors recommend a complete re-evaluation of one’s priorities

including occupational, family relationships, basic values and attitudes, and long-term goals in life. One must accept the need for living a balanced and healthy lifestyle based on moderation. A period of rest is a necessity as well as the need to develop new thought patterns. One must challenge the myths and belief systems one has created about who one is as well as to replace negative thoughts with positive ones. This includes keeping the present moment sacred by giving up a negative approach to one's situation or over-exaggerating one's problem. The authors remind people that one always has a choice in how one will interpret and respond to events in one's life.

Flexibility and a willingness to learn new coping styles rather than utilizing ineffective methods is imperative. An important factor is listening to and heeding one's own physical and psychological needs. Often we tend to push our bodies beyond their capabilities to the point of exhaustion just because we think *everyone else* is able to maintain such a pace. We must find the pace our bodies function best at and learn to be satisfied with that. Finally, one needs to exercise to reduce the internal pressures that accompany stress. These authors suggest that one must have social support to assist in one's recovery. A trusted friend can listen as we vent our feelings thus reducing anxiety, offer a new perspective, remind us that we are still valuable and loved, and help lessen our feelings of isolation.

As with the coping strategies recommended for those undergoing a large-scale, personal, or life crisis, suggestions for regaining balance and health in one's stress-filled life are not only similar, but also seem to fit into one of the four hope-enhancing themes (self, cognitive processes, relationships and spiritual) suggested earlier in this document.

The theme of *self* would appear to lend itself to the coping mechanisms involved with prioritizing one's commitments to gain better control in life, learning to believe in oneself thus leading to an increased feeling of self-confidence, and making better choices in *how* one copes or deals with a situation that leads to more personal competency and maturity.

*Cognitive processes* relates to one's thinking patterns and coping styles that focus on positive thinking, cessation of worry, fear, and irrational thinking would fit into this category. *Relationships* is represented in the coping strategies that suggest learning to play and spending time with others (including pets). If one notes that the theme of spirituality seems to be over-looked, I would caution one to consider the strategy of finding *purpose and meaning* in life. For many persons, this incorporates a strong element of something *larger than oneself* which is often found to be spiritual in nature.

If reactions to a stressful event as well as recommended coping strategies are very similar for those involved in a disaster or life crisis as well as for those involved in a series of long-term constant or chronic stressors, then it would seem to follow that hope-enhancing suggestions for one group would also be applicable to the second group. In other words, methods for maintaining hope used by victims/survivors of the Pine Lake Tornado may be useful for teachers in crisis.

## Teachers in Need of Hope

While the focus of this document is on individual teachers in crisis, it seems important to consider the larger picture for a moment. I believe that teachers, as a group, are in danger of losing their hope. In many ways, teaching is more than just a job to many individuals in the profession; it is a calling. If one recalls, this is exactly the type of personality that is most at risk for burnout. Yet, the very nature of what the job currently entails as well as treatment of teachers in general, seems to almost guarantee the destruction of some individuals called to the profession. This can be seen by the seemingly unprecedented numbers of teachers away on extended illnesses, stress leaves, and other forms of long-term disability as well as those actually leaving the profession. In fact, Francois Tisi, chief executive officer at the Ontario Teacher Insurance Plan (Richmond, 1999) states that “Mental health accounted for 40 percent of all claims, up from 30 percent in the past 18 months” (p. 1). John Reid, in the same article, adds that “Mental stress now tops cardiovascular problems as the No. 1 reason for disability claims at the Teachers Fraternal Society of Ontario” (p. 1). Reid goes on to say that “A third of the claims by teachers are for mental stress” (p. 1). Apparently the number of cases of mental stress leave began to rise gradually about five years ago and the number of claims for chronic fatigue has also increased substantially (Richmond, 1999, p. 1).

While I would suggest that most members of the profession still have hope in and for the individuals they teach, that hope does not necessarily extend to the educational system itself. Pat Dunne, director of the London District Catholic School board states that

. . . a great deal of that stress is related to the bashing teachers have been

taking for the past several years. For the most part all they've heard is they're not doing a good job, the kids aren't getting the education they should be getting; they're overpaid and working less. It obviously damages the self-esteem of a person. (Richmond, 1999, p. 2)

This is a serious problem as Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) suggest that teaching is about hope more than anything else. Each child is a hope for the future and it is easy to hope when things are going well. It becomes *essential* to hope when difficulties and problems are encountered such as those found in our burgeoning systems of today. Hargreaves and Fullan believe that hope makes a difference on an individual level when it provides one with the capacity to remain calm in trying situations; when the teacher still believes in the child and his/her future regardless of present circumstances, that problems can be solved, and that the teacher's own actions and interventions can have an impact.

Bonnie MacKay (1994) addresses hope on a generational or societal level. She insists that hope is the greatest legacy one generation can give another. Teachers are in charge of the future because they work with children--tomorrow's society. Individuals in the profession can have hope for the future because they know their students will carry on with what teachers have started. Therefore teachers cannot give up because they are the ones to give the students a legacy of hope. Hargreaves and Fullan believe that hope is what sustains teachers and institutions are in a position of creating the climate and conditions that make people feel more or less hopeful.

Society may not be too concerned that some individuals are experiencing illness, burnout, and a loss of hope as a result of personal crises induced by extreme stress. When, however, one considers the current educational and societal climate and the overwhelming

expectations our society places on teachers, one should become cognizant of the fact that more and more teachers may collapse under such conditions. In light of the need for teachers and society to have and instill hope in its children and the possibilities of tomorrow, one begins to realize the importance the role of hope has in individual lives.

As stated earlier, I propose that teachers on leaves due to stress (and stress-induced illness) experience accumulated stress on a magnitude similar to that of a tornado survivor. While a survivor of a tornado is suddenly confronted by critical incident stress and must cope to survive, the stressors teachers face are usually not as noticeable or confrontational. So they are allowed to accumulate, almost un-noticed, until they become overwhelming. This type of stress is often not recognized until it is almost too late. By this time individuals involved are often mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausted, have lost their confidence and self-esteem, are questioning their purpose for being in this world, and are broken and depressed. Researchers have much to learn from how a disaster victim/survivor copes with (and is assisted with coping with) crises that can be applied to the teaching profession. Specifically, one can learn about their hope.

There are some serious flaws in how the educational system provides for teachers in general and stressed teachers, specifically. These are especially noticeable when one compares to how those in high crises occupations (firefighters, paramedics, police, medical personnel) are treated. Some of these have been noted previously and include the level of care and respect shown to employees by their employers, the support received versus betrayal, and powerlessness versus a voice in the matter. While the educational system provides a “Wellness Program” that *appears* to address health needs, in reality it

fails to offer specific, structured programs to enhance teacher wellness. Rather, activities such as a group event to Yuk Yuk's (individuals pay cost of evening) and individual exercise programs where one earns points for time spent exercising which can accumulate to earn prizes of t-shirts, dinners out, and massages offered.

While these are nice little incentives, participation is voluntary and all are conducted on one's *own* time. There appears to be a lack of structured programs that specifically address the needs of those in crisis. Contrast this with the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and Defusing programs employees in crisis-oriented occupations receive as often as employees deem necessary. Often, these occur on *company* time. Such debriefings offer one the opportunity to voice at least a portion of one's story, acknowledge the incident and one's feelings regarding it, and be listened to in a supportive environment. As part of a group, one immediately realizes that he/she is not alone and can also gather suggestions from others regarding coping strategies. The beauty of this program is the opportunity to begin to share one's story.

Teachers, by virtue of the label *professional* must not voice concerns and fears for danger of being *unprofessional*. There is virtually no opportunity to share one's story and one is left isolated and wounded. Healing is not allowed or able to occur.

The necessity of *sharing one's story* cannot be underestimated. Remen (1996) states that "often times of crisis are times of discovery, periods when we cannot maintain our old ways of doing things and enter into a steep learning curve. Sometimes it takes crisis to initiate growth" (p. 110). Remen; Adams and Mylander (1993), Noddings (1992), and Witherall and Noddings (1991) all suggest that such healing comes through sharing

our stories and listening to the stories of others.

Adams and Mylander (1993) believe that life in us is diminished by judgement (both by self and by others) far more often than by disease. This can stifle our life force, spontaneity, and natural expression. Remen (1996) suggests that we surrender being whole people for many reasons, among them is an attempt to be a *good person*. We hide the parts of ourselves that we are ashamed of. Dean Ornish states that the “real epidemic in our culture is emotional and spiritual heart disease: the sense of loneliness, isolation, and alienation that is so prevalent in our culture because of the breakdown of the social networks that used to give us a sense of connection and community” (in Remen, 1996, p. xvi). According to Adams and Mylander and also Remen, the shamans attribute illness to soul loss--a loss of a sense of awareness of the sacred in us and around us. In fact, many authors wonder if stress is as much about a compromise of values as it is a matter of external time pressure and fear of failure. Thus the need for telling our stories.

Sharing our stories is healing for several reasons. Ornish suggests that when people are in a place in which they feel safe enough to talk about what is *really* going on in their lives, to tell their stories without fear of being judged, abandoned, or criticized, then people are much more likely to make life-enhancing lifestyle changes (Remen, 1996, p. xvii). As well, when we tell our stories we begin to learn to accept and love *all* aspects of ourselves--even those parts we are ashamed of, embarrassed by, and do not like (Adams & Mylander, 1993; Noddings, 1992; Witherall & Noddings, 1991; Remen, 1996). This helps us to develop new, more loving belief systems for ourselves.

Remen says that listening is the most powerful tool of healing. She states,

Everyone has suffered. It is the wisdom gained from our wounds and from our experience of suffering that makes us able to heal. . . . Expertise cures, but wounded people can best be healed by other wounded people. Only other wounded people can understand what is needed, for the healing of suffering is compassion, not expertise. (p. 217)

Herein lies our answer to, what I believe, is how one learns to cope and to hope.

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study involves survivors of the Pine Lake Tornado (July 14, 2000) and teachers under severe stress hereby referred to as *teachers in crisis*. Four individuals involved in the Pine Lake Tornado (one injured--TS-1; the campground owner--TS-2; and two who were at the site, were uninjured, and assisted in the aftermath--TS-3, TS-4) and three teachers in crisis were interviewed by said writer. As well, questionnaires were given to an additional ten teachers considered by themselves or by their circumstances to be *in crisis*. Eight were completed. One was not completed due to the teacher experiencing another unexpected life crisis. The other survey was not returned until after the study was completed.

An element of time constraint, the limited number of survivors and teachers in crisis to whom this researcher had access, as well as a limited number of individuals comfortable sharing their stories, accounts for the reduced numbers of participants in this study.

Of the teachers in crisis *interviewed* for this study, all three had been off work on long-term stress leaves. One recently returned to teaching in a new position, school, and capacity; one returned to a teaching assistant position in September (having decided that teaching was not a viable option for her) and is continuing to feel depressed, tired, and challenged; and the third has chosen to take some time away from the teaching profession.

To look more closely at the teachers *surveyed*, four were off-work at the time of the interviews (T-4, T-5, T-8, T-10). One was on a stress-related long term disability (LTD) until retirement--T-10, one was on a stress-induced illness and on LTD--T-8, and

two were on stress leaves--T-4, T-5. Two participants were substitute teaching (T-4, T-5) and three had difficult experiences in their chosen professions the previous school year (T-6, T-7, T-9).

Considering the substitute teachers, one--T-5 (after having been on a stress leave) had chosen this route as opposed to a permanent teaching position to provide a choice whether work was accepted on a day-to-day basis. The other--T-4, has recently decided to look for a new career apart from teaching. This was in response to some negative interactions with administration in various schools as well as some exceptionally challenging behavior issues encountered.

The two teachers who experienced difficulties the previous school year (T-6, T-9) chose to seek alternatives to teaching. One (T-9) formed his own seasonally-based business thus locating a new focus and outlet. The second (T-6) desires marriage and a family. Should this not transpire, she is seeking a form of home-business or Internet-based business in which to transfer her skills and energies.

Each of the fifteen participants who agreed to take part in the study was provided with a *Participant Information Sheet* (specific to either a tornado survivor or a teacher) which explained the nature of the study and what would be required of the participant. If still willing to participate, individuals were asked to sign an *Informed Consent* sheet (again specific to tornado survivors or teachers).

All individuals were also asked to complete the *Herth Hope Scale* (Appendix, p. 175). This was originated by Herth (1988) and designed to ascertain current levels of hope. It was felt that knowing the current hope level of each participant at the time of the

interview or survey would provide some baseline data for comparison purposes.

As well, teachers in both the interviews and surveys were asked to complete two brief questionnaires. Those no longer *in crisis* were asked to complete the questions as they remembered back to the difficult period. The first (Appendix, p. 177), adapted from the Burns Anxiety and Depression Checklist (Burns, 1984), was used to determine those problems the participants recognized as experiencing or having to deal with. This was used to determine how participants were feeling about their job, physical and emotional reactions they may be experiencing, and what they perceive to be stressful or burdensome at work. Responses were scored in a fashion similar to the Herth Hope Scale and converted to percentages.

The final questionnaire (Appendix, p. 178), was designed to determine the kinds of tasks associated with teaching that participants found stressful and to discover what, if any, positive or healthy techniques or coping strategies individuals had engaged in to counteract or mitigate against the stressful tasks. Once again, scores were assigned as per the previous two forms. Detailed analysis of written responses occurs under the *Analysis and Results* section of this document. It should be noted that all questionnaires were purposely kept brief as teachers are busy and also because individuals in crisis are not always able to cope with long, detailed forms.

Finally, the interviewer completed an *Interview/Survey Field Notes* form on all individuals interviewed. This provided some basic information regarding the interview and brief notes and reflections gathered during the interview itself.

While both tornado survivors and teachers under stress were interviewed on hope,

the nature and focus of some questions was slightly different. Seven questions were exactly the same on both questionnaires as were the three closure questions. For tornado survivors the question tried to determine where the participant's hopeful attitude came from. Was it a part of his/her personality or attitude or influenced by someone? For teachers, questions focussed on identifying coping strategies used to deal with the stress as well as whether coping techniques influenced one's level of hope. There was also an element of determining whether participants perceived stress as influencing their hope.

All interviews were conducted in a location of the participant's choice. They were also audio-taped and transcribed in such a manner as to enhance the reader's comprehension. Thus, words such as "um", "uh", and other linguistic tags were left out as well as the interviewer's encouragers such as "Tell me more," "Can you give me an example?" and so on. The content of the participant's responses was, otherwise, transcribed verbatim. As well, I took the liberty of clarifying responses ([found in brackets]) when the speaker's meaning was unclear or confusing. This tended to occur when the interviewee was referring to something discussed with interviewer prior to the interview beginning or motioning with hands.

For the most part, a relaxed, conversational approach to the interview was used. I focussed on being an interested, nonjudgemental, supportive listener to the participant's story. At times a narrative format was used as the individual was encouraged to tell his/her story. While the objective of the interview was to gather information for this study, I believe, as do Adams and Mylander (1993), Jevne (1994), Higgins (1994), Remen (1996), and Noddings (1992), that when we take time to *really* listen to someone's story, we both

learn, heal, and come to understand each other on a more intimate level as we begin to build community. To avoid an attitude of *taking from* but not *giving to* study participants, this writer endeavored to give a little something back by truly hearing each story.

Upon completion of the interviews, each participant was sent a Thank you card and a copy of the transcript was delivered to the individual who requested one. I am grateful to all participants as, for many, this was a challenging endeavour. It is difficult to discuss such personal information with loved ones, and to have it used in a study would render it even more so. Many were hesitant to be audio-recorded and, in fact, individuals who had indicated an interest in participating, withdrew due to this aspect. As well, many teachers were concerned that interview results might be discovered by superiors regardless of confidentiality and were quite hesitant to discuss work situations and conditions. Simply by virtue of this study eventually being placed in the University of Lethbridge library left some teachers silent or *vague* in their answers for fear of implicating superiors in their responses and being charged with *unprofessional* conduct. It seems many felt that, regardless of names being omitted, they could be identified by nature of their current situation. Some of these same teachers felt free to “talk” after the interview was completed.

All participants were assigned a code as opposed to using birth names. Codes were designated as Tornado Survivor - and a number (TS-#) or as Teacher - and a number (T-#). This was to provide anonymity and protect those involved. Transcripts were transcribed with each line being assigned a number beginning with “1” and continuing in like manner throughout the interview. This was to allow for easy reference to the texts.

All transcripts were coded for later analysis purposes. The four key themes regarding hope were used for initial coding. These were: Self (meaning or purpose in life, sense of control, personal competence--resilience, resourceful, adaptable, self-confidence, and maturity), Cognitive Processes (positive versus negative self-talk, education or knowledge of the situation, belief in a future, and perception of the situation), Relationships (parents, family, friends, pets, and specialists), and Spiritual (God, angels, church, clergy, prayer, spiritual beliefs, nature, and music). At the same time responses were also coded, when applicable, on whether the participant's hope or lack of it was based on an internal or external source (i.e. personally possessing a belief in a future that one could participate in or someone else having the belief in a future for the individual in question) and was specific or generalized (i.e. having hope in a specific outcome or just feeling hopeful in general).

If one had hope, it was coded in terms of being labelled a bright spot (such as a spectacular sunrise or birds singing), sustaining hope (gets one through a difficult situation and is believed by this writer to come from the four general hope themes), or pure hope (which is when one can see no solutions to one's situation but believes that, somehow, one will survive the crisis). Noted, but not usually coded was the participant's energy level during the interview as this has a profound influence on the interviewee's perception of a situation as well as on their ability to negotiate and apply coping strategies. Finally, it should be noted that challenged and unchallenged hope was not coded as I felt that only those who have had their hope challenged in some manner were participating in the study.

Any hope-building or diminishing strategies not delineated in the four themes

previously described were also coded. Symbols and other artifacts participants deemed reflective of or reminiscent of hope were also coded and will be analyzed in the following sections of this document. Symbols and other artifacts participants deemed reflective of or reminiscent of hope were also coded.

In addition to being coded in the manner described above, the teacher interviews were also coded a second time (below the original coding) specifically looking for instances in which hope was diminished or stress was more pronounced. This was so the researcher could identify the seemingly negative instances that contributed to reinforcing the difficult situation in which teachers found themselves.

A thorough analysis of the results of this study can be found in the upcoming sections of this document.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### Interviews

All interview responses were originally coded for four specific themes I associated with hope. Results of the coding process can be found in Figure 2 and indicate that all four themes were represented by all except one participant who did not refer to a spiritual component. In addition, most, if not all, of the categories within the themes of *self* and *cognitive processes* were represented by each participant. There were some initiatives participants engaged in which I had *not* anticipated previous to the research. Some of these seemed to fit into given categories and one, while appearing most appropriate to one particular theme, defied categorization. As well, several initiatives seemed to belong to more than one category.

While conducting and coding the interviews, it became immediately apparent that both tornado survivors and teachers in crisis had representation of the four major themes of hope as well as many of the specific categories each entailed. However, there was a noticeable difference in the nature or quality of the responses. In general, responses from the tornado survivors were reflective of a more positive, life-enhancing mind-set or outlook on one's situation as compared to the teachers. For this reason, I chose to analyze and consider both sets of interviews together rather than separately for purposes of immediate comparison. Each theme will initially be considered independently and new initiatives suggested by participants will be incorporated into appropriate categories and themes as they are discussed.

Participant responses were broken down into specific categories under each theme

Table 1

Results of Interview Coding

Self	Cognitive Processes	Relationships	Spirituality
Meaning TS = + 4/5 = 80% T = - 3/3 = 0%	Self-Talk TS = + 20/22 = 91% T = + 8/21 = 38%	TS = + 96/107 = 90% T = + 30/50 = 60%	TS = + 16/16 = 100% T = + 23/24 = 96%
Control TS = + 6/8 = 75% T = + 4/14 = 29%	Education TS = + 9/9 = 100% T = + 2/2 = 100%		
Self-Conf. TS = + 2/5 = 40% T = + 3/13 = 23%	Future TS = + 7/7 = 100% T = + 6/10 = 60%		
Person. Compe. TS = +19/19 = 100% T = +13.40 = 33%	Perception TS = + 28/29 = 97% T = + 7/25 = 28%		
Maturity TS = + 7/7 = 100% T = + 8/8 = 100%	Escape TS = 0 T = - 5/5 = 0%		
Internal TS = 151 Total T = 161 Total	Positive = 144 (95%) Positive = 73 (45%)	Negative = 7 (.05%) Negative = 88 (55%)	
External TS = 89 Total T = 68 Total	Positive = 68 (76%) Positive = 47 (69%)	Negative = 21 (24%) Negative = 18 (26%)	
Without Teacher-One:			
Internal T = 99 Total	Positive = 30 (30%)	Negative = 69 (70%)	
External T = 49 Total	Positive = 35 (71%)	Negative = 13 (27%)	

and then analyzed as being either positive (life-enhancing) or negative (life-diminishing) to the individual in question. Finally, both the Tornado Survivor (TS) responses and the Teacher (T) responses under each category were scored and converted to percentages for comparison purposes. For example, in the Self: Meaning and Purpose in Life category, tornado survivors had four out of a total of five positive responses thus deriving a score of 80% positive responses. The teachers had three out of a total of three negative responses (or not positive responses) and acquired a score of 0% positive responses.

### Self

This theme consists of five basic categories.

#### Meaning or Purpose in Life

The first is *Meaning or Purpose in Life*. The tornado survivors referred to this category on five occasions, of which four (or 80%) were deemed to be life-enhancing responses.

Typical remarks were as follows:

*“There must have been a reason. I believe there’s a reason for everything. I really do. I’ve had some bad things happen in life. It seems like for every bad thing that happens, something good came of it”* (TS-2, Lines 165-167).

*“I have always believed there’s an undercurrent of responsibility--not that everyone is here for a reason but that everybody that is here can have a reason”* (TS-4, Lines 154-155).

The single life-diminishing response was,

*“And I really questioned why I survived when the little ones didn’t”* (TS-1, Lines 58-59).

Teachers made three references to Meaning and Purpose in Life and they were all negative. All seemed to be quite similar in nature and appeared to center around the thought, “What’s there to live for?”

*“There were times when I really didn’t want to live but ‘what’s there to live for?’ went through my mind”* (T-1, Lines 71-72);

*“I have another reaction. I don’t think you’ll like it. I wonder when we get so emotionally down if refusing to do what we know would help is an unconscious death wish?”* (T-1, Lines 242-244) and

*“An example of this is that, five years ago my bottom-line thought for extremely difficult, seemingly unending situations was always, ‘If there seems to be no other way out or through or around this situation, I can always choose suicide’. And that was comforting. I think more, the idea of finding a solution to end the situation was comforting”* (T-2, Lines 54-58).

Tornado survivors may feel a sense of having lived through a life-threatening situation and questioning their purpose for having survived. This would be seen in a more positive light of, “There must be something I am meant to do or achieve”. Teachers, on the other hand, may have a perception of having been through enormous stress and heartache only to find themselves either no longer capable of working or not wanting to work. Naturally, they would be more cynical in questioning the meaning or purpose of their existence.

### Sense of Control

The second category under the theme of self is *sense of control*. For the most part,

tornado survivors had a sense of being in control (after the tornado) in a positive or accepting way 75% of the time. Examples of responses were:

*I'm planning on digging a hole in the side of the hill--a little cubicle where I can go when the wind blows. I'll have a little root cellar. Maybe we should build one on the side of the hill and we could all go there" (TS-1, Lines 152-154).*

This may be in response to not feeling in control of the weather, yet it is a resilient solution as opposed to giving up and being fearful.

*"I probably have to plan things to make my life work" (TS-3, Lines 62-63).*

*"To me, the individual can achieve something. And they're probably not even going to know what snowball effect we may have had, if we did have one" (TS-4, Lines 156-158).*

As noted in the Crisis section of this document, a crucial part of recovering from a natural disaster is to re-frame one's experience in such a way as to re-gain a sense of participating in an ordered universe in which one has control as opposed to a universe which is chaotic. Of the two negative responses, one reflected a fear of the weather and yet a willingness to continue on:

*"And I'm not sure I'm brave enough. Like I'm afraid of the wind now. I've never been afraid of the weather but the wind now--I don't know . . ." (TS-1, Lines 148-154)*

and the other discussed a loss of independence and the need to rely on other people:

*"And it is really difficult to accept. I found myself kind of locking myself in my house when people were out working because it was too difficult--all these people doing stuff for me. You know, we're the hosts. This is our home. We look after our customers,*

*our friends. They're not supposed to look after us. That's a real reversal and it's really difficult. Very, very, difficult"* (TS-2, Lines 323-327).

This same participant also noted acceptance of the situation, however difficult:

*"I have met so many nice people through all this. I told many people I feel humbled and I believe it is a very humbling experience to lean on people"* (TS-2, Lines 316-317).

Teachers had only four out of fourteen positive responses or 29%. A reason for this could be the sense of responsibility teachers may feel thus ensuring that each one takes the experience personally and blames oneself for one's situation. Teachers may see themselves as being in full control of their situation whereas tornado survivors can easily hold the tornado, itself, to be responsible for their predicament.

Most teacher responses had an element of self-blame such as:

*"I think perhaps in my other job [with all the stress], I may have had too high of expectations. When I couldn't meet those--when I was helpless--then it bothered me"* (T-1, Lines 34-36).

*". . . she was out of control. I guess I was too. I basically found myself with my hands around her neck . . . I can't remember specifically what set me off but it scared me because I realized how close I was to the edge at that time"* (T-1, Lines 55-58).

*"And suddenly it's all whipped away from you and I think that's what leads to the hope just dying"* (T-3, Lines 99-100).

*"I think because there was stress in both places, there was no refuge. I couldn't go to work and enjoy it and enjoy the people there--a refuge for those eight hours. And*

*then I couldn't leave that spot and go home and have refuge. And I think even now, even though my home life is more peaceful, it's still not really a refuge for me because there's still always problems. There's always something happening. And there's no safe place to be. So that leads to a lack of hope. Because there's no safe place to bring any hope or any positive good things inside of you. And when it's always one crisis after another--no matter how small it is--So now it seems the only safe place is in my bedroom. I come home and sleep. My only refuge is in sleeping because I'm so overworked everywhere"* (T-2, Lines 109-118).

Responses indicative of a sense of control arose out of a sense of having learned from past experiences and desiring to respond in a more life-enhancing way. T-1 portrays an excellent example of this in Lines 36-37,

*"I've done what I can. If you choose to ignore it, if you choose to come in late; that's your problem."*

### Personal Competence

The third category entitled, *Personal Competence* consisted of three traits: resilience, resourcefulness, and adaptability. Participant responses of *had to keep going*; *couldn't quit* and references to *taking care of oneself* which included emotions and getting/not getting enough rest were also added to this category. Once again tornado survivors seemed to be much better at this than teachers in crisis. All of the tornado survivor responses were positive as compared to only 33% of the teacher responses.

A possible interpretation of this diametric difference between the two groups is

that the tornado survivors, regardless of what had been going on in their lives prior to the disaster, were suddenly confronted with a crisis of enormous magnitude and chose (or were forced) to gather all of their resources to cope. In contrast, teachers had been trying to cope or survive a series of mini-crises for a very long period of time until they finally collapsed. They no longer had the wherewithal or energy to cope. These teachers just wanted, desperately, to rest.

Responses of tornado survivors reflected a sense of *one must not quit; one must carry on, if Plan A does not work, then try Plan B*, and *one must be responsible and accountable*. All teachers had a knowledge of *how* to care for self under stress but, for some reason, chose not to. Most isolated or avoided others; a lack of rest was a common concern with overwork being a key reason for this; and eventually all *gave up* for a period of time and escaped into the safety of their *caves*.

Obviously a huge part of this category is the level of energy one has. Immediately apparent to me in the interviews was the high energy level of the tornado survivors as compared to a much lower level among the teachers in question. Perhaps tornado survivors viewed their situation as a challenge to rise above whereas the teachers had been trying for a long period of time to overcome their situations and had finally collapsed. This makes sense in light of the suggestion by Montgomery and Morris (1989) that one feels a sense of power, victory, or achievement simply by surviving a disaster such as a tornado. This would energize or motivate one to continue on. In contrast, teachers are not in a position to feel a sense of accomplishment simply because they survived another day at work.

### Self-Confidence

The fourth category is *self-confidence* and like hope, is most noticeable when it is diminished or absent. For the most part, self-confidence was only discussed when it was challenged although there were some instances in the interviews when it was alluded to. Overall, I noticed that the tornado survivors seemed to exude an attitude of more confidence than the teachers in crisis. This may have been because tornado survivors did not blame themselves for the disaster.

Tornado survivors had a score of 40% in this category. When one considers the responses it becomes apparent that participants had an increased sense of confidence or self-esteem when they were remembered by others with concern:

*“The people who knew me through someone else and called me just to say they were glad I had survived. You know I was really, really touched. The other thing I was really touched about was [names] being at the hospital visiting the people who were there”* (TS-1, Lines 36-40)

or they loved life, themselves and also believed in themselves:

*“I love life and so as long as you like what you’re . . . you have to like yourself. You really . . . if you don’t like yourself there’s no hope. There really isn’t. You’re wasting your time. I think the most important thing is you have to first of all like yourself and then everything is good. There’s nothing . . . I really truly believe you have to like yourself”* (TS-2, Lines 181-185).

A feeling of not being accepted by others decreased self-confidence: *“I remember very few times--I have had times when I’ve been really down. When*

*I left [name of business] and went to work in [name of town] and it was a tough place to work because they don't welcome outsiders. Twenty one years is a long time to work some place and I lived in residence and I wasn't royally welcomed there to begin with. I eventually was. I had very black moments where I can remember thinking a fast car on a crooked road was a solution” (TS-1, Lines 231-236),*

*“I felt like such an outsider” (TS-1, Line 243),*

*“I don't hardly ever cry and I do remember being really tearful at that time. I worked so hard and I felt so unwanted. When I left, patients and staff all said, ‘Why are you leaving? We just got to really like you.’ I thought, ‘You should have worked harder at it” (TS-1, Lines 365-368).*

For teachers, a lack of control seemed to diminish confidence:

*“I can't remember specifically what set me off but that scared me because I realized how close I was to the edge at that time” (T-1, Lines 57-58),*

*“But when [husband] left . . . it was the last thing. Everything became overwhelming. I stayed in my room and cried and slept” (T-3, Lines 15-16).*

Other instances that eroded confidence were a personality type that was fearful and could not defend self:

*“Well, I think I've always been a shy person who has avoided conflict at any cost. I was also quite insecure and fearful. So, any time problems arose in a job, I would consider it a personal failure, blame myself, and live in insecurity and fear” (T-2, Lines 4-7);*

*“Having the personality I have and being new to each of the teaching situations*

*(the new kid on the block), I found myself giving in, accepting the blame professionally as well as personally, and somehow being unable to stand up for myself. I don't know why but I've never been able to stand up and say my truth"* (T-2, Lines 12-16);

*"Because I've been insecure and fearful and tend towards negative thoughts when things go bad, this has always compromised my hope"* (T-2, Lines 138-139) ;

*"But I'd have to do my resume and I guess it's easier to stay here right now. At least I know here--it's safe. I don't think I have the energy to start again in another school. And I'm . . . I guess I'm afraid"* (T-3, Lines 69-71)

and a need to please people or be seen as *perfect*:

*"I think I did things to please people--hoping that by doing that I'd feel better"* (T-3, Lines 151-152);

*"And that's very exhausting because you can't please everybody"* (T-3, Lines 189).

Anything which counteracted these situations such as an ability to defend self were seen as confidence building:

*"I feel I am much stronger for the most part, recognize and am proud of the fact that I have not compromised my integrity in these situations, feel far more secure in myself, confident, and don't really care what others think as much as I used to. I think I'm learning to like and to value myself"* (T-2, Lines 28-31);

*"As I said earlier, I am much stronger and more secure and have more self-confidence in myself because of this experience. I have learned that, short of death, I will survive and I'll come out of, seemingly desperate situations, okay"* (T-2, Lines 175-177).

The confidence level for teachers in crisis was 23%. While tornado survivors had five responses alluding to self-confidence with two of them being positive, teachers had thirteen occasions in which this issue arose, and only three were positive. The conclusion could be drawn that broken teachers have a much diminished level of confidence as compared to tornado survivors. Again, this may be a result of the personal nature in which teachers could view their situation. Their interviews suggest that a sense of feeling a *failure* may be at the core of the teacher's experience.

#### Maturity or Experiences

The final category under self is *Maturity or Experiences* and all responses were positive. This is most likely a result of one learning from one's experiences and growing out of one's less mature responses. It is interesting to note that teachers had eight references to this category--one more than the tornado survivors.

Responses from both groups were quite similar and alluded to *growing out of adversity* and *rising above one's challenges*.

*"But I probably grew more than other times in my life. I was challenged to rise above it. I think the stressful times in my life--and I've really struggled where there's been terrible things happen--have made me rise to the occasion. I don't think you grow much when you're floating along in a comfortable pew. I really don't. I think adversity and struggles make you come to terms with life"* (TS-1, Lines 244-249) ;

*"I've had, at times, a difficult life and I've had to learn to stand on my own two feet and survive. I've learned that I can and that things do, eventually, get better"* (TS-4, Lines 164-167);

*“Actually, I think it was valuable because it helps me to re-think some of what went on then and how far I’ve come” (T-1, Lines 323-324) ;*

*“Things are now different in that I believe I needed these challenges in order to grow. I couldn’t go through life being afraid and fearful. I have learned that I can, and have, survived” (T-2, Lines 26-28).*

### Cognitive Processes

This theme consists of four categories suggested by this writer and there was also reference made to a fifth component by the teachers although not the tornado survivors. Each will be discussed in turn.

#### Self Talk

*Self-talk* is viewed as being either positive or negative. Other initiatives used by participants and incorporated into this category were humour, journaling, and possessing an optimistic reference point. As also noted in the previous theme, the responses of tornado survivors were considerably more positive (91%) in terms of self-talk than were teachers in crisis (38%).

Tornado survivors were recorded as having made twenty-two references under this theme and teachers made twenty-one. Typical responses of tornado survivors were:

*“Oh I can’t imagine not having hope. I can’t imagine what it would have been like to have sat down and said, ‘I’m not doing this’. I’m going to be seventy-six this month and I could have said, ‘What the hell? Time to curl up and die’. That never entered my mind--I’ve still got that quilt to do” (TS-1, Lines 325-327);*

*“So you can feel sorry for yourself but I’ll tell you, there’s a lot of people worse*

*off than you”* (TS-2, Lines 296-297);

*“I always try to see a better side of something rather than the bad side. If somebody shows me something I look for the good side . . .”* (TS-3, Lines 92-94);

*“I’d tell them I look for the little things. I look for . . . and when I find them, I enjoy them. But small things”* (TS-4, Lines 173-174); and

*“Hope is a small area of appreciation and being able to appreciate it means we can be more than we are. Just the fact that you can feel appreciation is something special. You need to appreciate the things in your life. Let’s talk about the little things that you like. Put it in a day-to-day perspective”* (TS-4, Lines 173-185).

It seemed that once the tornado was over, survivors had a sense of making the best of their situation and moving on in life. At this point, they were not caught up in the disaster itself and were able to rely on strategies such as positive self-talk, a sense of humour, journaling, and just trying to be optimistic. If one remembers back to the theme of *self*, it was discussed that just by virtue of surviving a disaster would give one a sense of empowerment. It would be reasonable to suggest that feeling empowered and having *cheated death* would certainly influence one’s self-talk and perception of the situation.

The first teacher (Teacher-One) was in a new educational position that she enjoyed and her responses reflected negative self-talk only when referring to the previous stressful classroom situation. Examples of this can be found on Lines 140-141,

*“When things got too bad I thought about them at home”* (T-1, Lines 140-141)

and

*“I am just so filled with myself and my problems that I can’t see anything else. I*

*just focus on these things”* (T-1, Lines 318-320).

There are also examples of more positive self-talk from this teacher which seem to suggest learning from past experiences and applying this new information to the present vocational setting. This can be seen in the statement,

*“More and more I’m trying out there at this school, ‘I’ve done what I can. If you choose to ignore it; if you choose to come in late; that’s your problem”* (T-1, Lines 36-37).

The other two teachers seemed to continue to feel in a crisis situation of some sort and appeared unable to initiate many coping strategies. They are still trying to survive and thinking positively about their teaching situation may not be conceivable or realistic at this time although positive self-talk may be applied in other areas of their lives. Typical responses of thought processes for these teachers were:

*“I think the most hope-diminishing for me are my negative thoughts that seem to go along with my fearful personality”* (T-2, Lines 83-85) and

*“But then there’s many, many times when I think to myself that . . . I try too hard and I do too much and I end up right back at the beginning. I don’t have any more to give and I can’t do things any different from how I’ve done them”* (T-3, Lines 135-138).

In general, these interviewees suggest that as one is removed from the crisis situation and begins to heal, one’s self-talk becomes more positive the further one moves along the healing continuum (such as the tornado survivors). If one remains in the difficult situation (such as teachers still in crisis), it becomes more difficult to maintain hope.

## Education

A second category is the amount of *education* or knowledge one has regarding one's situation. The responses of both tornado survivors and teachers were all positive which would suggest that knowledge *is* power. Becoming more aware of one's situation appears to culminate in more positive coping strategies as well as a sense of empowerment or more personal control.

Tornado Survivor-One discussed how returning to the site of the disaster provided personal healing:

*"And when I went back--I had to go back after the tornado. I had to go back"*

(TS-1, Lines 157-158);

*"Everybody knew I shouldn't be there and I knew I shouldn't but I had to go and my son was there. I had to do it. I had to see it when I was more rational"* (TS-1, Lines 172-177);

another survivor spoke of how understanding *why* a customer is cranky is beneficial to coping with their behaviour:

*"[Husband] often tells the staff that you have to understand why you have a cranky customer"* (TS-2, Lines 208-209).

Another indicated that assisting in the tornado aftermath provided her with a much more comprehensive understanding of the breadth of her organization as well as how it functioned:

*"The effort to be there, to help at any level, it doesn't matter where the request came from--has given me a better understanding and a new respect for the [name of*

*organization] and its capabilities and the people that work for it--the volunteers that make up the core of everything we do. It's given me what I call a global picture of it in that all of our programs are interconnected on some level through our mandate and our fundamental sense of principles"* (TS-4, Lines 42-47); and

*"It's probably broadened my focus so I'm more [organization] oriented and less program specific than I was before. I think that's a huge growth and I feel privileged that I was allowed to be part of that. I was. I feel privileged"* (TS-4, Lines 50-52).

Healing also appeared to be the case for one of the teachers and the reason for this may be two-fold. First, this teacher is no longer in the difficult situation, has had eighteen months rest, and has recently begun a new teaching position which she enjoys. Secondly, positive self-talk responses reflect a situation in which she learned better ways to care for self as a result of negative experiences in the past. For example,

*"Yet I didn't always practice this. I am learning one thing. Now if I can just learn some of the others"* (T-1, Lines 217-219).

The other two teachers participating in these interviews did not refer to any educational growth. Perhaps this is due to the fact that both teachers still perceive themselves to be in a crisis situation. It could be individuals cannot benefit from knowledge gained or gleaned from their situation until they have distance and perspective. These teachers do not have the benefit of such distance. They are also unable to see how to apply knowledge they do possess (i.e. how to care for selves) to their current situation. This may be because they are focused on surviving and do not have the energy or initiative to apply coping strategies at this time.

### Belief in a Future

*Belief in a future* is the third category found under Cognitive Processes. Tornado survivors obviously had belief in a future in which they could participate; teachers were less sure with 60%. This may have been due to the fact that tornado survivors had *survived* the crisis situation and were actually looking ahead and already participating in a future good. Except Teacher-One who was already involved in a new teaching situation and therefore, a more positive future, the other two teachers remained in their crisis situations and were not in a strong position to experience said situation as becoming more positive as they moved from day to day although Teacher-Two had more hope for a better tomorrow based on her faith.

Tornado survivors were planning and re-building:

*“But now that we’ve been forced into changing--I mean it’s going to be a hundred times better. We’re going to correct all the mistakes that there was”* (TS-2, Lines 25-27) and actually experiencing things getting better. Teacher-One was able to rely on her faith and see a *better tomorrow* regardless of the present situation:

*“Now my own hope in a better tomorrow--I’ve always had that”* (T-1, Lines 64-65).

Teacher-Two had her faith challenged and, for the most part, was able to rely on her hope in God (pure hope) that she would somehow survive:

*“God gives me a sense of, when I feel I can make no impact on a situation--things seem horribly out of control, that God is ultimately in control and this can still be okay. Things will work out. I will get through this situation even though I personally can’t see a*

way out” (T-2, Lines 68-71);

*“It has helped me to realize that life really does go on. We may not know to what or when it will happen, but it will go on and you will feel better. I think hope has kept me fighting and trying through a very painful growing experience and it has helped me survive. If I didn’t have hope for a better tomorrow, I would never have chosen to stick around for it. At that point, suicide would most definitely have been an option”* (T-2, Lines 164-169); and

*“There have been lots of times when it has been other people’s conviction and voiced belief that things will get better, that the future will be okay that have kept me going. I have clung, sometimes desperately, to a hope that God will somehow see me through”* (T-2, Lines 170-172).

Teacher-Three had, during her past, hope in a future good but could see no future in which to participate given her current situation. Her interview transcript contained responses such as,

*“I don’t see any hope or light in my future”* (T-3, Line 9) and

*“No, I don’t see any kind of future”* (T-3, Line 20).

It is interesting to note that, as with self-talk, one’s ability to see a positive future worth participating in increases the more one is removed from the crisis situation and the healing process occurs.

### Perception of Situation

The fourth category this writer suggested under the theme of cognitive processes is *Perception of Situation* and this seemed to be closely related to *self-talk*. This makes

sense in light of the fact that one's self-talk influences one's perception of a given situation and vice versa.

Tornado survivors had a positive perception of their situation 97% of the time which is in keeping with their positive self-talk responses of 91%. Teachers perceived their situations as positive only 28% of the time which is slightly lower than their self-talk responses of 38%. Responses of the tornado survivors varied from,

*"I have a whole new outlook on life. I really think I do"* (TS-2, Line 6),

to a belief that it was a gift from God that Pine Lake contained *swimmer's itch* the weekend of the tornado thus limiting the numbers of people at the campground:

*"So people weren't camping. Thursday there were even some campers that left angry because there was swimmer's itch"* (TS-2, Lines 159-160);

a focus on the good things that came out of the disaster:

*"There's been a lot of good things come out of this"* (TS-2, Line 22);

*"I saw a lot of initiative being taken. We had a situation where people were not familiar with their environment--like not normally being there--and might not know where their limits might be. But that didn't matter. They found something to do they knew would be acceptable and they did it"* (TS-4, Lines 96-99);

and a feeling of gratitude for the caring people in one's life:

*"I almost get tears in my eyes when I talk about my gratefulness and how I feel about it. And I'm not emotional"* (TS-1, Lines 398-399);

*"Just people. They're in different walks of life and how they handled it was just amazing"* (TS-3, Lines 42-43); and

*“And I think that’s amazing. That’s how I see it. I’m just in awe of the response and the attitudes and the commitment and the work. I am. I truly am”* (TS-4, Lines 114-116).

Tornado survivors were in a position of having *gone* through a crisis and are now, having survived, looking back thus encouraging a positive perception of one’s life. Teachers in a crisis are still in their difficult situation and appear to be unable to see positives within their lives. They do not have the benefit of distance as well as acknowledgement of having *survived*. Responses that especially reflect this are:

*“Over the last few years I’ve hated my job (the politics, not the kids), myself, dreaded getting up in the morning to go to work, and was certainly feeling the effects of working in an extremely toxic, and sometimes, oppressive environment”* (T-2, Lines 23-25);

*“Professionally, work has been very, very stressful for the last couple of years”* (T-3, Line 10);

*“And when it’s always one crisis after another--no matter how small it is . . .”* (T-3, Line 116); and

*“Oh gosh . . . I don’t know because I don’t have a lot of positives within me to give away . . .”* (T-3, Lines 214-215).

A response not included as a category by this writer was one of *escape*. The most obvious reason is because it does not seem to have an element of hope-enhancement within. It was, however, a coping mechanism referred to by the teacher respondents although not by survivors of the tornado. Five references were made to the escape

component and all resonated a negative connotation. This could be a survival mechanism for individuals within the immediate throes of a crisis. Certainly Mitchell (no date) and Montgomery and Morris (1989) suggested that part of the human being's response while in a crisis is to focus on survival which may certainly include an element of escaping danger.

Examples of teacher responses were:

*"I isolated. I had a tendency to do this right along. I'd crawl into my hole and pull my hole in with me"* (T-1, Lines 106-107);

*"[My parent's] home was a safe haven in which I didn't have to protect myself against my own negative thoughts of the sometimes, horrendous experiences I was going through"* (T-2, Lines 48-50);

*"I didn't want to exist. I just wanted to be away. Away from [name], my son; away from everyone and everything including myself. I just wanted to sleep"* (T-3, Lines 6-8); and

*"At home, well like I said, I seek refuge in my room"* (T-3, Lines 154-156).

While I chose not to include *escape* as a new and separate category under the theme of cognitive processes, it was felt that it should be mentioned within this theme as it seems to imply a measure of self-talk and perception.

### Relationships

The third major theme in building hope is *Relationships* and includes living beings with which one might interact and have relations such as parents, family, friends, pets, business associates, specialists, etc. Tornado survivors made positive reference to

components within this theme ninety-six out of one hundred and seven times or 90% of the time. Teachers made positive references on thirty out of fifty occasions or 60% of the time.

Friends were appreciated for their support and companionship as noted in the following excerpts:

*“When I was in the hospital, there were forty-nine calls on my voice mail and my son has had tons of them. And I would be trying to answer the phone calls and they would be backing up on the voice mail again and I said at one point, ‘I know I survived the tornado. I hope I survive the phone calls.’ The people who knew me through someone else and called me just to say they were glad I had survived. You know I was really, really touched”* (TS-1, Lines 33-38);

*“We had customers that called us--about twenty of them got together one night and they wrote a poem and they phoned us in the middle of the night--I don’t know if we were wavering between quitting or not. But I think if [husband] would have said, ‘I can’t face it’, I’d have said, ‘Okay.’ But these campers they read the poem to him. Well I don’t think there was a dry eye in the place and he woke up the next morning and said, ‘Well, we’re re-building’ and that was it”* (TS-2, Lines 45-50);

*“And that’s sad that I don’t reach out more often because I have the kinds of friends who, if I were to reach out and say, ‘I need you’, or ‘I need you to listen to me’, or ‘I need you to say a word of encouragement’, or whatever, they would do it. I have that kind of friends. And I have the kind of friends who will listen if I have to bitch and complain and they won’t try to fix me. They’ll just listen. So I’m very blessed in having*

*people like that”* (T-1, Lines 307-312).

In fact, it was friends who provided the initiative and strength for the Pine Lake campground owners to re-build after the tornado, and friends who provided a large amount of the physical labor during the campground clean-up. It was friends who took care of Tornado Survivor-One when she was unable to care for self and one friend actually provided a reason for Tornado Survivor-One having lived through the tornado thus giving her life meaning and purpose.

While both groups of participants acknowledged good friends, it seemed that overall, those who survived the tornado reached out to their friends and also *allowed* them into their lives as support, concern, assistance, physical labor, etc. In contrast, the teachers, while acknowledging the possession of good friends did not appear to reach out to these friends, nor did they let them into their lives during the crisis. Rather, they avoided these valuable resources and isolated.

Examples of such occurrences were:

*“I would like to be able to say when I was really down I would phone friends for encouragement and strength. But I didn’t. I isolated”* (T-1, Lines 105-107);

*“The fact of the matter is that these people [friends] never enter my mind when I am isolated. It never crosses my mine. Not once* (T-1, Lines 315-317); and

Teacher-Three alluded to seeking refuge in her bedroom (Lines 16-18, 117, and 119), setting up her work area so she is isolated from everyone except her students (Lines 142-145) and no longer making time for or remembering commitments with friends (Lines 156-160).

Several participants (both tornado survivors and teachers) made references to pets, all of which were positive. It seems that animals are in a unique position to offer us unconditional love and acceptance, are always thrilled to see us, comfort us in our sad and grieving times, and provide companionship when we are feeling lonely. Some respondents suggested their pets provided them with a sense of responsibility thus keeping said individuals connected to our world. Somehow our pets wriggle into our hearts even if we choose to shut human beings out. Typical responses were as follows:

*“ . . . and I was concerned about the pets because I wasn't there and I talked about him in Emergency. I said, 'For the first time since he's gone, I'm glad my dog was put down'. Because it was a lot easier than what he was going to have”* (T-1, Lines 133-136);

*“And then the little gaffers with their dogs. Remember them? Carrying them close to themselves in the Hall? So that was kind of a lasting memory there”* (TS-3, Lines 40-41);

*“My dog teaches me to find joy in the small pleasures in life”* (T-2, Lines 59-60);

*“She [pet] offers me companionship and love with no criticisms. She thinks I'm perfect. Just holding her furry little body gives pleasure and often, comfort”* (T-2, Lines 61-62).

Specialists, be they doctors, pharmacists, RCMP officers, volunteers from specialized areas, etc. were referred to positively by participants in both the tornado survivor and teacher groups. It seemed that these people holding specialized skills and knowledge were especially valued for their human-ness; especially their caring. They

appeared to take an interest in the individual in question and respond in a compassionate manner. Examples of typical situations were:

*“A very young policeman was standing there and I said, ‘My fanny pack’s there and I’ve got to get it’. And he said, ‘No I can do that for you’. You know, so kind”* (TS-1, Lines 191-193);

*“I was ashamed to get my prescription filled for a while and finally went down and I really liked [pharmacist] who had the drugstore and I said, ‘You know [name], I’ve been packing a prescription around for the past three weeks--in my purse--ashamed to come and get it filled’. It was Librium--it was one of the few I could take and he said, ‘Don’t do that to yourself’. I really liked him”* (TS-1, Lines 380-385);

*“. . . but I also sought my doctor at times. It was very affirming for me”* (T-2, Lines 100-101).

The majority of responses made by tornado survivors were positive in terms of relationships and interactions. Except one individual, who found her husband’s pessimism to be difficult to live with, the only other negative response was when a husband died. Perhaps, having survived a potentially life-threatening situation rendered familial relationships more precious. The response of Tornado Survivor-Two summarizes the feelings best:

*“I think our family is a little closer. We’re a really close family anyway. And I think we’re even closer yet”* (Lines 74-75).

Teacher-One and Teacher-Two seemed to have felt more accepted by and found hope within parents and family members. Teacher-One refers to being able to talk with her

mother:

*“ . . . I would phone my mother. I guess there was two reasons for that. One was she's been growing emotionally and spiritually in the last few years as well. So she would listen to me. I would phone her because she wouldn't try to fix me”* (T-1, Lines 111-113),  
having the support of her husband:

*“My husband and I have been struggling for a few years but for the most part he was very supportive of me”* (T-1, Lines 97-98)

and discovering new life and hope in the birth of her first grandchild:

*“When you have a new life like that, it definitely helps you get things in perspective”* (T-1, Lines 131-132).

She did, however, make mention of the fact that her husband expected her to be perfect and they had been *struggling*. While this might be seen as stressful or hope-diminishing, it was made clear that when said participant truly needed support, her husband could be counted on.

Teacher-Two found enormous strength and acceptance from her parents :

*“My parents were very supportive. I always found unconditional acceptance there and also a better perspective on the situation”* (T-2, Lines 47-48);

*“My parents re-iterated often that I would make it through”* (T-2, Line 95)

and appeared to lean on them quite heavily during difficult times. In fact, they seemed to be one of her soul sources of support in terms of relationships. This is important to note as this writer would suggest the pattern among teacher participants would be to rely very heavily on one or two family members for support while keeping the rest of the world at

bay.

Teacher-Three appeared to follow this pattern in that her hope was found in her son:

*“I concentrated on [son] a great deal from the moment he was born. He was . . . he was my hope I guess”* (T-3, Lines 122-123).

Whole-hearted support had been found in her, now deceased, father:

*“. . . I think my dad believed in me. I think he always thought that I could do whatever I tried to do--whatever I attempted”* (T-3, Lines 178-180);

*“So the support was from my dad. So when he died, it was really hard”* (T-3, Lines 187)

and currently, conditional support from her mother:

*“My mother, like you said conditional, I think with my mother it was conditional. Like, ‘You’ve put your foot in and you’d better make yourself shine. You better finish, you better do it, you better do a good job of it’. She was very supportive in the sense of helping with [son] and late at night when I was studying and so on. She’d be with [son] all the time and looking after him. In that sense she was very, very supportive”* (T-3, Lines 180-187).

Yet, this same participant felt unable to turn to other family members:

*“I had the support around me from my mom and dad--not my family”* (T-3, Line 178).

A very noticeable difference in responses between tornado survivors and teachers was in the negative experiences involving people in general. Tornado survivors appear to

recognize the negativity as a function of the person in question as opposed to themselves. While it was not pleasant to be on the receiving end of such negativity and pessimism, tornado survivors tried not to take it personally. The experience did not seem to be crushing or hope diminishing.

*“You know what puts me down? When somebody says, ‘You’re not going back to tornado alley?’ That just slays me. . . . That discourages me. It really does. I don’t think you should let something ruin your life just because something bad has happened”* TS-1, Lines 216-218);

*“For some reason the cranky customer that comes in--one out of a hundred--but those are the ones that you focus on. And they’re the ones that bring you down. If you could just quit focusing on them and think about the other ninety-nine that are so good to you, you would be happy all the time. But we don’t do that”* (TS-2, Lines 12-16);

*“You just don’t realize the amount of people who don’t realize how unthinking they are”* (TS-2, Lines 101-102);

*“You’re just carrying out the rules so don’t take it personal. But I’m the worst person for trying not to take things personal. Like if somebody hollers at me, I do tend to take it personal”* (TS-2, Lines 216-218);

*“I need to realize that with some people I just can’t do that. So learning to walk away--cut your losses. That would be a failing of me. I don’t do that probably as soon as I should”* (TS-4, Lines 122-124);

*“But with some people, it doesn’t matter what you try, it’s not going to work. And that is what erodes me--that type of attitude”* (TS-4, Lines 128-129).

The exception to these responses was Tornado Survivor-One's references to a previous event in her life in which she felt unaccepted by the people in her new job and also had to cope with a pessimistic husband.

*"I remember very few times--I have had times when I've been really down. When I left [work place] and went to work in [town] and it is a tough place to work because they don't welcome outsiders. . . . I had very black moments where I can remember thinking a fast car on a crooked road was a solution"* (TS-1, Lines 231, 235-236)

At the time, she was quite distraught and found the situation to be very challenging. Looking back, TS-1 realized the personal growth she achieved.

I would suggest the experience of Tornado Survivor-One being unaccepted by fellow co-workers in her new occupation to be key in understanding the mind-set of teachers in crisis. While she was in the situation, TS-1 had suicidal thoughts:

*"I had very black moments where I can remember thinking a fast car on a crooked road was a solution"* (TS-1, Lines 235-236);

*"I can remember considering driving my car into the garage and just letting it run when I was working in [town]"* (TS-1, Lines 363-364);

was *"really, really down"* (Line 371) and *"weepy"* (Line 372).

This is also the case of the teachers who still perceive themselves to be in their crisis situation.

Teacher-One occasionally questioned her purpose in life:

*"There were times when I really didn't want to live but 'What's there to live for?' went through my mind"* (T-1, Lines 71-72)

and had very bleak moments in her work situation in which she felt little hope:

*“As far as the school was concerned, yeah. It was flat. Nothing was working there”* (T-1, Lines 76-77).

Teacher-Two also became quite reclusive (other than seeking out her parents) and experienced very difficult times during her trying, and as yet, uncompleted occupational journey. Teacher-Three appears to have given up and is merely going through the motions of living:

*“So now I’m thinking if things didn’t turn out good back then, I can’t do any better. I gave my best and it still didn’t hash out the way I wanted it to. I can’t give any more”* (T-2, Lines 31-33);

*“At least I know here--it’s safe. I don’t think I have the energy to start again in another school. And I’m . . . I guess I’m afraid”* (T-2, Lines 70-71).

The point to be made is that these teachers are *still* in the crisis to some extent. As they move closer to recovery (as Teacher-One and Teacher-Two have) one notes references to growing and learning from past experiences:

*“I guess I would hope that I learned from that experience and that even though I didn’t take care of myself at that time that, should my stress level reach the point that it was before, that I would take better care of myself because I think that’s the secret to a lot of the whole thing”* (T-1, Lines 4-7);

*“I have learned that I can, and have, survived. I feel I am much stronger for the most part, recognize and am proud of the fact that I have not compromised my integrity in these situations, feel far more secure in myself, confident, and don’t really care what*

*others think as much as I used to. I think I'm learning to like and to value myself"* (T-2, Lines 27-31).

Teacher-Three is still deep within her personal crisis and cannot see or appreciate personal growth to the extent that the other teachers can. Tornado survivors, by comparison, are no longer in their crisis and are able to see more positives.

As noted earlier, while tornado survivors could recognize negativity as a function of the person in question, teachers appeared to interpret negativity, to some extent, as a personal flaw within themselves. Questionable remarks, actions, and attitudes initiated by supervisors, parents, and people in general, appeared to be taken on a more personal level and internalized as a failing on the part of said teacher thus diminishing self-esteem and self-confidence.

*"I think perhaps in my other job [with all the stress], I may have had too high of expectations. When I couldn't meet those--when I was helpless; then it bothered me"* (T-1, Lines 34-36);

*"quoted earlier in this document"* (T-2, Lines 8-21);

*"So the school got a great deal. I did the work of a teacher but got paid as a TA. And the supervisor took all the credit for the work I did, my ideas . . . So it was hard to feel good about myself there"* (T-3, Lines 10-18, 46-49);

*"I felt I was barely holding on--keeping my head above water--A supervisor gave me and other TAs the majority of her work with the request that we do it at home on our time will give you an idea of how bad things were. When [husband] left, I just crashed. I went on a stress leave. This year I'm working in the same school as a TA and I don't*

*think I will teach again” (T-3, Lines 61-71);*

*“I think what builds my hope . . . and it’s like a reward system . . . is you work so hard and give so much and it’s recognized in small ways. And you think that it’s going to lead you somewhere whether it’s a pat on the back or whether it’s a job opportunity. Whatever it might be. But you think there’s going to be a reward because you are giving so much. And suddenly it’s all whipped away from you and I think that’s what leads to the hope just dying. It seems like it dies suddenly . . . And often it’s due to other people in more powerful positions abusing their power . . . taking the credit for what you’ve done” (T-3, Lines 95-102).*

A national disaster involving human beings usually garners wide-spread media coverage. This virtually guarantees an outpouring of community and personal support for the victims and survivors involved. Teachers, by virtue of the individuality and anonymity of their situations, remain isolated and do not receive *automatic* support or recognition for having gone through a horrendous event. While tornado survivors are seemingly on the receiving end of enormous support networks, teachers must find the energy and strength within themselves to seek assistance. For those still within the crisis situation or on Long-Term Disability, yet emotionally exhausted, seeking support and assistance can be a daunting proposition indeed. This may be a partial explanation for the fact that tornado survivors made 107 references to seeking relationships while teachers made less than half that with only fifty.

### Spiritual

An interesting phenomenon appeared to occur when the results of the fourth theme

of hope, *Spirituality*, were considered. To recap, this theme included such components as a belief in a Higher Power or God and references to angels, spiritual music, prayer, clergy, the Bible, an appreciation for nature, etc. To understand this phenomenon, one must consider the results on a more individualized basis.

It seems that, of the sixteen references to spirituality made by tornado survivors, TS-1, who had experienced significant injuries as a result of the tornado and TS-2, who had lost a large portion of her livelihood as well as saw some good friends and life-long campers injured or killed during the disaster, together made all but one of them. The other two survivors, while at the site at the time of the tornado, had not experienced personal injuries or property loss.

Teachers made a total of twenty-four references to spirituality with T-1 and T-2 making the majority of them at twenty-three. Teacher-three referred to God once during the interview, and of all the participants, hers was the only reference that was negative. Before continuing this discussion, it would be beneficial to consider the single negative response made by TS-3 as it seems to provide insight into her situation.

*“I don’t have any kind of belief that God is helping me. That’s not to say that I don’t believe He exists but I think He’s just watching me. He created me and that’s it. His part in my life is not great. He doesn’t give me hope because I don’t think He influences my life in some way”* (T-3, Lines 200-203).

This appears to suggest that T-3 believes there is a God and yet, because her dreams and desires have not materialized in a manner she would prefer, she has given up on the hope that God can help her. This becomes even more apparent when we later consider the two

levels of hope (generalized and specific) as this individual has referred on several occasions to having had hope in specific outcomes only to have them dissipate.

Returning to TS-1, TS-2 and T-1, T-2, one could make a case for the fact that when each individual's hope was challenged in a specific manner and, they were helpless to control the outcome of the situation by their own initiative, each turned to a Higher Power whom (they believed) had ultimate control. TS-3 and TS-4 provided support and assistance in the tornado aftermath and were, therefore, able to maintain an illusion of control thus bypassing a need to rely on or cling to a Higher Power. Naturally, such a supposition does not preclude the likelihood that some individuals are more developed spiritually or have had more opportunities during the course of their lifetimes to grow and mature in this area.

Participant responses depicted many elements of the spirituality theme. There were references to spiritual music as in:

*“When I have a tragedy in my life--my husband died, or when something really bad happens, I turn to spiritual music”* (TS-1, Line 80) and

*“But even before I did Twelve-Step work I always resorted to spiritual music in times of stress”* (TS-1, Lines 111-114);

references to spiritual beliefs:

*“I would know that no matter how bad things got on this earth, there is a better world coming when Christ comes”* (T-1, Lines 12-13);

references to God:

*“Faith in God also keeps me going”* (T-2, Line 64),

*“God gave me a year and one half rest and then He gave me a job”* (T-1, Lines 128-129),

*“But I do believe in God and I do believe there’s a reason for everything”* (TS-2, Lines 170-171) and

*“And I wrote to my Higher Power--to God--every morning. Just a note asking for surrendering of my will and my food and my life and asking for His help but quite often I would write a little more”* (TS-1, Lines 122-123);

and to Nature as in,

*“It makes for a really nice life. And what better place to live? How can you ever feel sorry for yourself living here?”* (TS-2, Lines 207-208),

*“A rainbow. A mountain scene with a creek running through it”* (T-1, Lines 263-264).

As well, many of the symbols suggested by participants as depicting hope for them were nature-based such as birds, sunrises, and the sky:

*“I’m never so down I don’t enjoy the birds, the sunrises, or the sky”* (TS-1, Lines 250-251),

a dark cloud followed by a sun:

*“Everybody can interpret pictures differently but I would see it as a really dark cloud . . . at the far left of the picture is pouring rain. Then it eases off as you get underneath that cloud. Then it clears with the sun coming out”* (TS-4, Lines 220-222),

a mountain creek, riding a horse in the mountains:

*“A rainbow. A mountain scene with a creek running through it. A small child or*

*baby exploring. Horseback riding in the mountains” (T-1, Lines 263-265),*

and a rainbow was mentioned by several participants

*“You asked about a warm, fuzzy story. That’s what I think of now when I think of hope. It’s a rainbow” (TS-2, Lines 242-243);*

*“noted above” (T-1, Line 263);*

*“Doves. Doves of peace. My family. God’s rainbow. Those symbolize hope to me” (T-2, Lines 179-180).*

An element of spirituality could also be found within the symbols of hope such as in a rainbow and a dove.

#### Components of the Hope Model

Generalized and Specific Hope are considered to be at the base of the Hope Model. Both levels were alluded to within the interviews. Specific hope was hope for specific, valued objects, goals, or desires and generalized hope referred to an overall sense that the future would be good regardless of the outcome of a situation. As suggested earlier in this section, Teacher-Three made seven references to specific hope, none of which seemed to have materialized in her life. The only other references to specific hope occurred when TS-2 discussed re-building the campsite and the desire for campers to return the following year:

*“And now it’s exciting. Now that we’ve gotten rid of all the bad stuff--it’s going to be really apprehensive next year. I mean we decided to re-build, worked hard--I mean until the snow we’ve been picking rocks, cultivating, and everybody working hard--and now it’s done and now the tale will tell next year. If nobody comes back, we’re going to*

*be in big trouble*” (TS-2, Lines 52-56) and

TS-3 suggested that, as compared to the world wars, the hope that loved ones survived the tornado was quickly realized in the Pine Lake situation as opposed to waiting months or even years as would have been the case during war time:

*“The war went on for years. This was done in a flash where everybody had hope that their people survived. They didn’t have to wait for weeks and months to hear bad news”* (TS-3, Lines 57-58).

Perhaps this indicates that while some participants have recognized that life will continue and hope must be maintained despite possible setbacks or changes, Teacher-Three places all of her hope in a wish list of specific goals which, if not realized, destroys her faith.

Examples of Teacher-Three’s specified hope include:

*“I’ve always tried to do everything right or do everything according to how it should be done and . . . be kind, be good, do all the right things. And things still never showed. They never turned out right”* (Lines 29-31);

*“I’m trying to have hope for a future relationship”* (Line 81);

*“I concentrated on going back to university and doing what I want to do. I thought reaching that goal would give me a future . . .”* (Lines 123-125); and

*“I think the little picture I have in my mind of where I’d be once I had my degree and [son] was grown a bit . . .”* (Lines 127-128).

It appears to me that while most of these goals originated with a potentially positive outcome, the teacher in question perceives the outcome to have been negative. In fact, the only specific hope that can be viewed as positive is the one for her son:

*“I concentrated on [name of son] a great deal from the moment he was born. He was . . . he was my hope I guess”* (Lines 122-123).

Again, this information provides enormous insight into the possible mind-set or thought patterns some teachers in crisis may engage in (while in the centre of the crisis) and why hope and coping strategies are so hard to locate or initiate.

Other participants provided many examples of generalized levels of hope, all of which appear to be positive. They include the following:

*“Oh I can’t imagine not having hope”* (TS-1, Line 324);

*“Well I think as long as you have hope every day . . . it makes it easier to get up in the morning”* (TS-2, Lines 220-221);

*“People whine and complain about nothing when everything is going good but as soon as something happens, they’re [people to assist] right there. So it seems to give you more hope”* (TS-3, Lines 53-54);

*“Now my hope in a better tomorrow--I’ve always had that. My own philosophy in life is that anything can happen to us on this world but that’s not final. God has the final say as to whether we’re going to live forever or whether we’ll pay the final penalty. So my hope in that never, ever went down because it was totally separate”* (T-1, Lines 64-68).

As discussed within the Hope section of this document, I suggest there are three sources of hope: bright spots, hope that sustains, and pure hope. All were represented in the interviews. Considering bright spots, tornado survivors suggested nine and teachers related eight such sources of hope. All were positive and consisted of such

things as:

*“I never get so down I don’t enjoy the birds, the sunrises or the sky. I love the sky”* (TS-1, Lines 250-251);

*“That’s what I think of when I think of hope. It’s a rainbow”* (TS-2, Lines 242-243);

*“I’d tell them I look for the little things. I look for . . . And when I find them I enjoy them. But small things”* (TS-4, Lines 173-174);

*“Certainly when you see these little beings [new grandchild] so enthralled with life, so busy discovering things, everything is just wonderful . . . You know I’ve taken a lot of pictures and it has been a nice, nice thing to happen”* (T-1, Lines 132-133); and

*“My dog teaches me to find joy in the small pleasures in life. The suggestion of going for a walk will send her spinning around the room in excited anticipation . . . Just holding her furry little body gives pleasure and often, comfort”* (T-2, Lines 59-61).

Of interest and concern to me was the fact that Teacher-Three could not see or relate any bright spots occurring in her life recently. If one recalls, these are the little moments that occur throughout the day that can bring a smile to any who take the time to notice. Examples might be a child playing, birds singing, the smell of freshly cut grass, and so on. These have an impact on the quality of people’s lives and when one realizes that lives are composed of a series of moments, bright spots become very significant. Bright spots have the ability to give people a steady infusion of hopeful moments throughout our day. The fact that Teacher-Three is unable to *see* such incidents of hope could suggest the level of despair being felt as well as negate a potential source of hope.

*Sustaining hope*, as I suggested, arises from one of the four hope themes in which one finds sources of hope. This is the kind we actively search for when our internal hope has been seriously challenged. It can be recognized as the kind we lean on and may actually carry us through until we can stand on our own again. TS-1 alludes to finding this in her spiritual music as well as in her Twelve-step groups. TS-2 received this from customers who, over the years had become friends; T-1 suggests her faith provided sustaining hope as well as her husband. T-2 seemed to have received this from her parents. Again, TS-3 and TS-4 failed to refer to this source of hope. This writer would suggest that neither TS-3 or TS-4 *needed* such hope at this time.

It is conceivable that Teacher-Three finds some sense of hope in the outward *appearance* of what others seem to have. If one considers her comments:

*“This probably sounds very shallow but I see other people around me that have joy and I figure that if they have joy then it’s attainable for me too. And that’s what gives me . . . When I have hope, I look to other people. I don’t look within myself at all. I see that other people are able to have it and I think if I do things right this time--whatever, then it will come to me also”* (T-3, Lines 204-208),

it seems clear that Teacher-Three is dependent on others for all her hope--either her son, as mentioned earlier, or people who seemingly have what she, too, desires. This may be a reflection of the nature of her desperate situation. It is improbable to this writer that such hope would be considered sustaining. This teacher appears to have very few reliable, consistent sources of locating hope.

The final source of hope, *pure hope*, is mentioned by several participants as well.

Many make reference to the fact that when there appears to be no solutions to the difficulty, when one appears to have no control over a situation, when one cannot engage any strategies to accommodate one's situation; there is still an overall sense that, "God is in His Heaven and all will be well regardless of the outcome". To have such hope is indicative of one's situation because it is all one has left. TS-3 considers this to have been the hope depended on by those involved in the two world wars:

*"I suppose you can relate to that just a minor thing--big to us--but minor compared to what happened over in Hitler's thing. I mean, imagine the hope they had to survive for so long"* (TS-3, Lines 55-57) and TS-4 suggests

*"Hope to me is the ability to believe that things can work out or will work out--that things will improve or can improve despite a lot of mountains or opposition or obstacles to overcome"* (Lines 61-62).

Teacher-Two makes note that

*"God gives me a sense of, when I feel I can make no impact on a situation and things seem horribly out-of-control, that God is ultimately in control and this can still be okay. Things will work out. I will get through this situation even though I can't personally see a way out"* (Lines 68-71), and

*"I think my hope was in the hope (which I often questioned and doubted) that God would 'do' something. That somehow I would survive the situation"* (T-2, Lines 93-94).

As discussed in the Hope section of this document, both internal and external strategies are involved in the hoping process. The work of Hinds (1988) and McGee (1984) suggests we rely more heavily on external sources of hope (relationships with

others) when we are very challenged and may actually have to *borrow* hope for a period of time. It is believed that as we grow and face challenges in life, we become more reliant on our internal sources of hope. An exception to this would be on those occasions when we are unable to garner the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual energies vital to utilizing internal and external hoping strategies.

If one considers the tornado survivors and teachers as a group, one discovers an obvious trend in internal and external coping patterns. Survivors appeared to utilize internal coping strategies 63% of the time as compared to the teachers relying on such strategies 70% of the time. This may reflect a need for the teachers, still in crisis, to attempt to cope slightly more often yet both groups obviously engage in coping strategies fairly consistently. The difference is in the *nature* of the strategies used. Survivors utilized positive internal strategies (self-talk, perception of the situation, etc.) 95% of the time compared to only 45% in teachers. In other words, while survivors only used negative strategies .05% of the time, teachers did so at a rate of 55%.

In terms of external coping strategies, survivors had 76% positive and 24% negative strategies as compared to the teachers at 69% positive and 26% negative. However, one must remember that Teacher-One is removed from her former crisis situation, has had eighteen months of rest, and is in a new teaching position she enjoys. Individually, her coping strategies followed the same pattern as tornado survivors with more positive internal coping strategies utilized than negative (See Table 2). If we take said teacher out of the equation, the remaining two teachers, still in crisis to some extent, reflect 30% positive and 70% negative internal strategies and 71% positive, 27% negative

external strategies.

It seems that both groups have similar numbers and kinds of positive and negative external encounters in their lives. However, this writer would suggest that, as noted under previous hope themes, the internal thought processes combined with a defeated sense of self, resulted in the teachers, in general, engaging in more negative internal coping strategies as compared to tornado survivors. Again, this could partially arise from the fact that the tornado was an event in which one had no control. In contrast, teachers tend to view themselves as having had the control in their situations and may also have had some seemingly personal assaults from administration, co-workers, parents, and so on thus rendering such situations *personal* as opposed to an act of nature. It is difficult to engage in positive coping mechanisms when one places blame for a given situation on oneself.

Another crucial factor, alluded to previously, is the amount of energy one has to employ. If one considers back to the nature of stress and crisis, one would realize that survival is the key factor during the actual crisis. Teachers, still within the crisis itself, would be lacking energy for little more than survival. The longer one remains in the crisis situation, the more exhausted one would become thus depleting all energy reserves.

Table 2

Individual Results of Internal versus External Coping Strategies

<b>Subject</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Both Pos./Neg.</b>
TS-1	Internal	51	48	3	3
	External	31	26	5	
TS-2	Internal	44	43	1	2
	External	27	17	10	
TS-3	Internal	24	24	0	1
	External	14	14	0	
TS-4	Internal	32	29	3	0
	External	17	11	6	
T-1	Internal	62	43	19	0
	External	19	14	5	
T-2	Internal	46	15	31	1
	External	25	22	3	
T-3	Internal	53	15	38	0
	External	24	14	10	

### Herth Hope Scales and Surveys

Tables of results for the Herth Hope Scales and the two surveys can be found in Table 3. These scales were scored by assigning a point of '0' to the category of *Never Applies to Me*, a point of '1' to the category of *Seldom*, a '2' to *Sometimes*, and a '3' to *Often*. All responses were considered to be positive or "+" except those of statements six, ten, thirteen, seventeen, twenty-two, and twenty-six. These were assigned a negative or "-" score. Essentially, scores were determined by adding/subtracting the numbers assigned to the participant's chosen responses. The highest level of response was a score of seventy-two. All raw scores were converted to percentages for easy comparison.

Results from the interview participant's Herth Hope Scales are consistent with other interview results. In general, tornado survivors reported, on average, being more hopeful (84%) than teachers (63%). It seems that Teacher-One, out of crisis and in a new teaching situation reported the most feelings of hope (85%); followed by Teacher-Two, nearing the end of the crisis situation and beginning to heal at 63%; and finally Teacher-Three, still in the grips of the difficult situation with 42%. In contrast, survivors were fairly consistent with their hope levels being 86% for TS-1 and TS-2, 76% for TS-3, and 88% for TS-4.

The survey which reflected each teacher's recognition of typical *problems* associated with one's profession that would be encountered within any given school month reflected Teacher-One perceiving *problems* at 72%, Teacher-Two at 79%, and Teacher-Three at 84%. The objective of this survey was to determine personal difficulties such as memory, health, mental attitude, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, etc. that

may be acknowledged or experienced when teachers are in crisis. Obviously the three teachers interviewed certainly report being aware of such difficulties which could be perceived or used as signs to cue others that a given teacher *may* be in trouble and in need of immediate assistance.

The stress scale was designed to determine an awareness of the amount of stress a teacher may be feeling and how that teacher copes with it. On average, the three teachers

**Table 3**  
**Herth Hope Scale, Problem Survey, and Stress Survey**

<b>Herth Hope</b>	<b>Problem Survey</b>	<b>Stress Survey</b>
TS-1 = 62/72 = 86%		
TS-2 = 62/72 = 86%		
TS-3 = 55/72 = 76%		
TS-4 = 63/72 = 88%		
T-1 = 61/72 = 85%	T-1 = 71/99 = 72%	T-1 = 29/51 = 57%
T-2 = 45/72 = 63%	T-2 = 78/99 = 79%	T-2 = 37/51 = 73%
T-3 = 30/72 = 42%	T-3 = 83/99 = 84%	T-3 = 28/51 = 55%
T-4 = 30/72 = 42%	T-4 = 54/99 = 55%	T-4 = 24/51 = 47%
T-5 = 52/72 = 72%	T-5 = 44/99 = 44%	T-5 = 15/51 = 29%
T-6 = 34/72 = 47%	T-6 = 46/99 = 47%	T-6 = 31/51 = 61%
T-7 = 60/72 = 83%	T-7 = 31/99 = 31%	T-7 = 30/51 = 59%
T-8 = 40/72 = 56%	T-8 = 66/99 = 67%	T-8 = 37/51 = 73%
T-9 = 62/72 = 86%	T-9 = 18/99 = 18%	T-9 = 24/51 = 47%
T-10 = 26/72 = 36%	T-10 = 73/99 = 74%	T-10 = 21/51 = 41%
T-11 = 43/72 = 60%	T-11 = 37/99 = 37%	T-11 = 21/51 = 41%

it might be that stress levels decrease when one applies positive coping strategies to difficult situations as noted in Teacher-One and Teacher-Three. Engaging in coping strategies that produce more pressure and anxiety as did Teacher-Two seems to result in higher stress levels.

A facet still to be discussed within the analysis of the results of this study is the relationship between the level of hope and the degree of *perceived* captivity in or, conversely, the ability to escape from one's situation. I would suggest this to be the cornerstone component to understanding hope.

If one considers the three teacher participants in the interviews, one will recall that Teacher-One is already out of (or has *escaped*) the difficult situation and is in a new, enjoyable position after eighteen months of rest; Teacher-Two is also out of the teaching environment and, while facing an uncertain future, is also beginning to heal and perhaps feels less helpless in her new situation; while Teacher-Three is still feeling *trapped* within her situation. I would argue that it is one's level of perceived ability to exert control in one's situation as opposed to feeling held hostage and, thereby helpless, that has the most impact on one's level of hope. The Hope Scales, Problem and Stress surveys of the other teachers seem to substantiate this claim to some degree.

The teachers surveyed with the highest levels of hope (Teachers Five, Seven and Nine) also appear to feel some control in their situation. Teacher-Five had been working in a permanent teaching position but, due to significant levels of stress, chose instead to substitute teach on those days she found convenient. This allows her substantially more control of her situation. As well, she chooses healthy coping mechanisms such as art

classes and enjoying family to further combat stress.

Teacher-Seven, although experiencing stressful moments throughout her day, appears to acknowledge those areas in which she has control and those in which she does not. Her coping strategies seem to reflect the ability to *shut out* those events which cannot be controlled (closing classroom door and avoidance) as well as take control where she can such as borrowing teaching materials from other staff to alleviate both a heavy work load and teaching outside of her subject area.

Teacher-Nine, although recognizing work-related stress (41%), reports fewer problems (18%) and a very high level of hope at 86%. This teacher, after an extremely difficult teaching year in 1999-2000, began his own seasonally-based business which provides him with a creative outlet and focus away from his primary career. This writer would suggest that said teacher has found a healthy perception of *escape* from his stressful career. Perhaps Teacher-Nine's level of stress is elevated because, although coping with the difficult situations, he tends to use strategies involving the administration whom he has suggested are the cause of some of the stress. As well, some of his strategies (keep sending problem students to the office until they are dealt with) and (stealing the office copy card to accommodate limited photocopying problems) seem to prolong the difficulty and, therefore stress, as opposed to finding an acceptable solution.

Teacher-Eleven has a hope level of 60% while at the same time has reported only moderate levels of problems and stress related to work. His personal situation may be the cause of the diminished hope level as he was recently divorced after a brief marriage. A son was a product of this union, and while he sees his son on alternate weekends, it is a

painful situation. I would suggest that, while this teacher might ordinarily overcome work difficulties and remain quite hopeful, his personal situation was a contributing factor in his survey responses.

The remainder of the teachers (Teachers Four, Six, Eight, and Ten) have all reported diminished levels of hope and moderate to high numbers related to *problems* and *stress*. All, could be viewed as being held captive in a situation over which they *feel* they have little control. Teacher-Four, after experiencing serious difficulties and a lack of support from administrators in her substitute teaching positions has recently chosen to leave the profession. She expressed to the interviewer an awareness of being “forced” into making this decision and is now feeling pressured to locate a new job or career.

Teacher-Six desperately wants to quit teaching and get married, yet she has not found a future husband and feels “forced” to remain in her teaching position.

Teacher-Eight is on a Long Term Disability (LTD) for medical reasons, yet is being “pressured” by her school administration because doctors are not sure what is “wrong” with her. Finally, Teacher-Ten has been placed on a LTD until retirement (two years). He has voiced the concern that he was “forced” out of teaching by school administration due to the horrendous teaching assignments said teacher was given year after year.

I would suggest that these teachers in question could certainly be feeling quite trapped, and sometimes angry about their given situations. Under such circumstances it would be highly likely that these teachers would also have more negative perceptions and self-talk regarding their situations thus increasing their perceptions of problems and stress and, thereby, diminishing hope.

In terms of coping strategies to alleviate stress, most teachers engaged in at least one that would be considered healthy and positive. Suggestions given were taking Saturdays off, exercise such as cycling or a running club and walking, therapeutic touch, talking to a friend, spending time with family, and approaching administrators with concerns, yet few were applied on a consistent basis. Some were a one-time only attempt and often strategies appeared to have occurred as a matter of course or living as opposed to a well-planned, organized approach to alleviating stress. As well, few seemed to specifically counteract the problem situation or reason behind the stress. For example, Teacher-Ten, while he was working, took Saturdays “off” to counteract his stressful situation. While this was probably beneficial, it did not specifically address his difficulties with the administration assigning him extremely difficult and challenging teaching assignments year after year.

I would suggest, as a result of these surveys and scales that many teachers are experiencing moderate to high levels of stress and most attested to the fact that a lot of problems arose as a result of their teaching situations. However, it appears to be one’s illusion or perception of control versus feeling captive in the situation that seems to have the most direct impact on hope. Perhaps if teachers were able to initiate or use systematic, planned coping strategies geared to specific difficulties or problems, they would begin to feel more in control, and therefore, less trapped in their individual situations.

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The central question of this study was, “what gives individuals hope to carry on when faced with seemingly devastating circumstances and more specifically, those individuals who have survived a tornado?” The premise behind the study was that while tornado survivors experienced a sudden, acute crisis in the form of a tornado, teachers experience a series of mini-crises throughout the school year that, if ignored, eventually build to a similar magnitude of the crisis experienced in a tornado. Further, it was presupposed that a significant number of educators do not apply strategies to neutralize the chronic mini-crises experienced throughout the day which can lead to teacher illnesses, depression, burn-out, stress leaves, and members actually leaving the profession because they do not recognize such crises as health-threatening and, even if they do, cannot seem to negotiate appropriate coping strategies.

The objective of this project was based on the idea that if researchers can learn how tornado survivors re-build or sustain their hope in the aftermath of a tornado, and assist teachers in understanding that mini-crises can culminate in a reaction similar to that of undergoing a tornado; perhaps positive, health-promoting and hope-building strategies gleaned from tornado survivors could be applied to those in the teaching profession with the anticipated result that more teachers would remain a healthy, vital part of the educational system.

The results of this study appear to give some verification to the fact that teachers are in a relatively high-stress employment centre yet, unlike occupations which are

recognized as being stressful such as firefighters, paramedics, medical personnel, and police, there appears to be few measures in place to assist such teachers in coping. Certainly, if the public and especially one's employer does not give recognition to such stress, it becomes almost *weak* or *incompetent* for teachers to acknowledge or give credence to the warning signs and symptoms experienced within their own bodies. Today's market place calls for longer hours, fewer employees, and an almost ruthless, cut-throat environment which discourages the acknowledgement of any perceived weakness. Perhaps this is why teachers fail to take the time and engage in the activities which would lead to the alleviation of stress accumulated in a hectic work week and promote a more healthy, balanced lifestyle. Certainly the teachers interviewed in this study acknowledged that they knew how to care for selves; they just failed to act on knowledge they possess.

It seems, when one considers the interview results concerning hope-building strategies, that teachers and tornado survivors utilize similar components within the hope-building themes (Self, Cognitive Processes, Relationships, and Spiritual). The difference between the two lies in *how* the components are utilized. Teachers appear to engage in more negative internal coping strategies such as negative self-talk and perceptions of the situation whereas tornado survivors utilize far more positive coping mechanisms.

As I have alluded to previously, teachers, unlike tornado survivors, are still in the high-stress work situation and have not experienced any relief. While tornado survivors can engage all of their energies in the pursuit of wellness following the disaster, teachers are still engaging their energies in the teaching situation itself as well as in

attempting to cope as their situation becomes more difficult. By the time the teacher's situation becomes desperate and they are faced with a health crisis of some sort, their energies have been depleted. Because one's energy level is a crucial factor in coping and building hope, it is understandable that the coping mechanisms used by teachers would be less effective than those of tornado survivors.

A third major difference between the tornado survivors and the teachers centres around an element of perceived captivity. Survivors had been caught in the throes of a tornado and subsequently released. Such individuals would most likely feel as if they had *escaped* their situation. As suggested earlier in this document, teachers still within the classroom situation as well as those facing health issues which resulted in long-term disability leaves may still feel *trapped* within their maze of difficulties unable to see any way out. Furthermore, a depleted energy level would render the initiation of coping strategies and location of assistance, etc. a difficult prospect indeed.

A fourth aspect that suggests a difference between the survivors and the teachers has also been discussed previously. This involves the level of media coverage and therefore, community awareness of the event. While the disaster has had world-wide media coverage thus mobilizing immediate individual, group, and community support and assistance for the victims and the survivors, teachers remain relatively anonymous. Any support that could have been offered has first to be requested. Again, this takes energy which many teachers are lacking by the time they are aware of the precariousness of their health situation. It also requires a willingness to admit or confront one's supposed *weakness* which can be extremely dis-empowering and personally embarrassing to some

educators.

Given this situation, one must consider the factors that can be taken from the experience of the tornado survivors and applied to teachers in crisis. I would suggest the answer may be partially found in the mobilization of support for survivors from family members, friends, and the community and also in the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Programs. As noted earlier, certain occupations are recognized as potential breeding grounds for vicarious trauma victims. Many employers have recognized this and have taken measures to counteract the potential damage. This includes employee educational and support programs as well as introducing Critical Incident Stress Debriefings and Defusing when appropriate. All contribute to an attitude of *care* both by the employer as well as the individual(s) involved.

I believe that the nature of the field of teaching incorporates an attitude of “a teacher’s job is never done” and, like housework, one can always find more to do. Combined with this are all the *extra* responsibilities a teacher has such as extra-curricular activities, Christmas concerts, supervision of after-hour school events, committee work, and so on. We have yet to mention the teacher’s home or personal life. CISD programs, as they stand now, would only be appropriate in an educational setting if a traumatic event (i.e. school bombing) were to occur and do not specifically address teachers undergoing continual mini-crises, many of which are interpreted as being a normal part of a school day. Perhaps, however, a similar tool could be developed specifically for use with teachers.

This writer would suggest that two basic components of the CISD programs may

provide the key to providing teachers with appropriate assistance. The first is the incorporation of an educational component. Teachers in this study have suggested that they do, indeed, know how one should cope with stress. As well, they claim knowledge in the dangers to one's body, and therefore one's health, when living under chronic stress. Why then, do they not take better care of themselves before it becomes too late? This problem seems to require an element of teacher education not only regarding the nature of stress, but also in *training* individuals to develop the habit of naturally applying coping strategies.

The second component inherent in the CISD programs incorporates an attitude of *caring* on the part of both the employer and employee. In the world of education, a portion of this caring must be the teacher's responsibility. Yet when one feels the pressures of a busy work day and faces a mountain of *homework* as well as the additional responsibilities within one's personal life, one may not wish to take the time to engage in activities which promote a healthy life-style. This seems to be a function of society today. Perhaps, as Noddings (1992) has suggested, we must promote more caring environments and communities beginning with self. This would require each of us receiving specific, concrete education and given practice time in self-care. To ensure one incorporates or assimilates self-care into one's day as a necessary part of a healthy life-style requires enough practice and experience for it to become a habit.

While I do not have solutions to the situation, there are some suggestions. Perhaps self-care should be incorporated, as Noddings suggests, into the school day. Short breaks could be used for students and their teachers to have a joke-telling session, view a brief

video comedy routine (or watch one cartoon in ten-minute segments over the period of a day), walk around the perimeter of the school, listen to meditational music, etc. As well, periodically throughout the school year, special activities of a longer duration could be planned. Emphasis should be placed on a quality life-style which would include actually scheduling individual time for self rather than encouraging students to over-commit to activities. Individuals could be recognized for living and promoting more positive coping strategies and healthy life-styles as opposed to emphasizing marks alone. Perhaps if self-care became a vital part of the school community and, therefore, a student's day, each student would learn and utilize positive coping strategies as a natural part of his or her day, throughout life.

Yet, how does one promote and develop the concept of self-care in the teaching community, as it is now, until it also becomes habit-forming? Certainly there is an attitude of care and respect for a valued employee needed on the part of the employer. Naturally, this must be visibly acted on as opposed to just alluded to by said employer. Perhaps initiatives such as those suggested for students would be effective or, at least, a starting point. Mandatory attendance at weekly ten-minute Monday morning staff meetings in which teachers were treated to muffins and coffee while being acknowledged for their contributions might be most welcome. At the same time personal stories could be shared, positive stories read from books, etc. ensuring a wonderful, positive start to the work week. A monthly staff noon hour pot luck (with supervision covered by the Parent Committee) or the introduction of a *quiet room* for staff in need with the added bonus of having one's class *covered* by a substitute teacher or administrator may provide a welcome

break to an irritable, overworked teacher. Do we need to consider visiting such ideas as insisting that parents and the community become more involved in the education and growth of our future leaders by coaching sports and running other extra-curricular activities? By the same token, I recognize that if not utilized in the spirit and intent originated, such initiatives do little to promote self-care.

A critical component of self-care may be an environment in which one can “tell” one’s *story*. Telling one’s story begins the healing process. It allows one to verbalize and consciously recognize the personal (physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual) impact and repercussions of the incident or situation. As individuals hear themselves telling their story to an authentic listener, they are given the most valued gift and caring of all; unconditional acceptance. Certainly this concept has been voiced by many writers and alluded to previously in this document. People involved in trauma work and those who survived the tornado are allowed the privilege of self-disclosure to a caring, empathic audience. It is a natural and crucial part of the healing process which allows for a realization of support as opposed to being all alone. As well, it provides the individual with the opportunity to have any negative perceptions and self-talk re-framed into a kinder light.

Teachers, by virtue of their “professional” stature are not allowed to share. This serves to keep teachers isolated in their fears and crises as opposed to perceiving themselves to be part of a larger group of like individuals who care and are available to listen and provide support. It also negates the potential possibilities for mutual understanding and healing which can be received from individuals in similar circumstances.

Perhaps if teachers were more able to give voice to their stories as part of a sharing group on a regular basis, they would begin, both individually and collectively, to heal.

The focus and narrow confines as well as limited participant numbers involved in this project do not lend themselves to generalized recommendations regarding *how* one learns to physically care for self. My objective was to discover and understand the hoping processes in tornado survivors with the intent of applying them to teachers-in-crisis. However, research findings suggest that both groups are aware of and utilize coping mechanisms as suggested by the four themes of hope. It is in the *nature* of how they are applied as well as their perception of personal control that is vitally different. The potential reasons for these differences have been discussed in detail yet this does not provide solutions as to how teachers-in-crisis can begin to *act* on their knowledge and take better care of themselves.

To address these issues (negative versus positive application of internal coping strategies, energy levels, perceived element of captivity, wide-spread support as opposed to anonymity and personality vs. situation), I would suggest a much longer, more detailed study focusing strictly on the issue of teachers-in-crisis with the intent of developing intensive, functional programs and suggestions that promote self-care among educators.

## DESCRIPTION OF CREATIVE PROJECT: WALL HANGING

As part of my own way of dealing with experiences as both a volunteer at the Pine Lake disaster and as a teacher at risk, I have included a creative project related to the themes, issues, and healing process. This wall hanging was designed to tell a story both literally and symbolically. While literal interpretation is obviously representative of the Pine Lake Tornado; symbolically, this could reflect a life crisis in any individual's life.

The wall hanging is composed of three horizontal segments. The first one begins our story and can be found at the bottom third of the design. It contains pieces of dark, heavy materials all arranged on an angle reflective of a fierce wind blowing. There is no rhyme nor reason in this design just as there appears to be no meaning behind disruptions in our lives be they tornadoes or other personal life crises. When in the throes of such disasters, all we seem to be aware of is the chaos which surrounds us.

Yet our story must go on as do our lives. This is the second horizontal segment of the quilt. A calm Pine Lake can be found following the tornado. Surrounding it are hills and valleys in shades of earth tones representing the re-building of Green Acres Campground after the tornado just as it represents re-building in our personal lives. Miniature people are depicted in this phase because they represent both the actual personnel involved during the tornado aftermath (emergency service and medical employees, volunteers, members of the community, etc.) as well as those individuals found in each of our lives that are there to support, and sometimes carry us, through our difficult times. All study participants interviewed referred to such significant individuals on

numerous occasions as an important aspect in re-claiming their lives.

The final horizontal segment can be found at the top of the wall hanging and is representative of a future good in which one feels able to participate. Here we find blue skies indicating the storm is over, the repair work is complete, and we must now walk boldly into our new future which is calling out to us. This portion of the wall hanging also contains symbols suggested by many of the study participants as their depiction of hope. The rainbow, symbolizing God's covenant or promise to His people was suggested by several participants. Word banners trailing behind doves (hope, faith, and caring) suggest various themes of hope found throughout the study and the birds, themselves, were suggested as being representative of hope. Nature was another element many viewed as portraying hope and is reflected throughout the wall hanging in the rolling hills, the lake, the storm itself, as well as in the sky containing a rainbow and doves.

Finally, in the background, sometimes hidden by the chaos of life and the flurry of activity which follows, can be seen a white, shimmering cross. Many study participants suggested that some form of spirituality was their anchor in life. While they may not be regular church attenders or worship in traditional manners, all seemed to have an awareness of Someone or Something greater than themselves to which they turned in times of extreme crisis. So while this cross may be partially obscured or remain unrecognized in our busy lives, when in the midst of a crisis that threatens to overwhelm us, when we are terrified and have no direction in which to turn, when we feel unable to do anymore to help ourselves; we reach out for this cross and it is there because it never lets us down. And eventually we can look back and see that some good or some growth

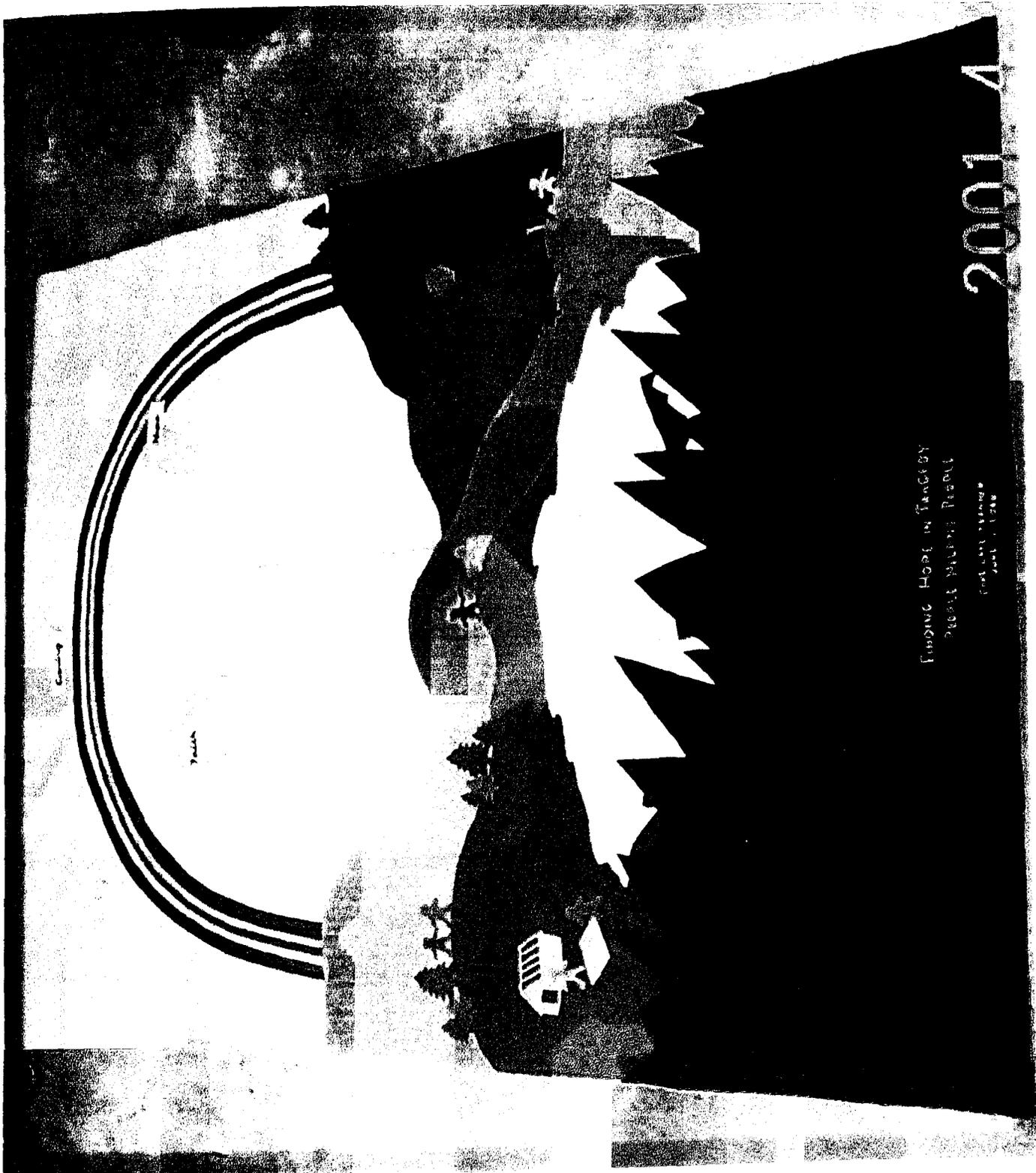
did come out of our personal crisis and we realize that healing has taken place.

The work is titled with the words, "Finding Hope in Tragedy: People Helping People, Pine Lake Tornado, June 14, 2000" found at the base of the project.

**Figure 2**

**Photograph of Creative Project: Wall hanging**

**Please refer to second (red) disk.**



FINDING HOPE IN TRAGEDY  
PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

CONFIDENTIAL  
JAN 1 1998

2001 A

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## APPENDIX A

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

#### Pine Lake Tornado

The purpose of this study is to further understand the experience of hope. Although hope is considered essential to healing, quality living, and life itself, there is little shared understanding of what it is exactly and how one finds, sustains, and re-builds hope.

The reason for this study is to attempt to understand the role hope plays in a life-threatening situation such as the Pine Lake Tornado. By entering into dialogue with a series of people who have different perspectives and experiences of the same crisis situation, common themes and patterns are expected to emerge. In understanding how survivors of the tragedy were able to maintain their sense of hope, it is my intent to apply such findings to teachers in crisis. Perhaps if we can discover how others have sustained, re-built, and searched for hope-giving strategies in the face of tragedy, we can assist burned out individuals in the teaching profession in maintaining hopeful attitudes thus keeping them a healthy and vital part of the education system. While the intent of this study is to focus such hope-sustaining strategies use by tornado survivors on teachers in crisis, the information could be very useful for anyone involved in a critical situation.

Should you participate you will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire concerning your current level of hope and to share your Pine Lake Tornado story (as much as you feel comfortable with) as well as experiences, observations, and understandings about hope. You will also be invited to share written, artistic, or symbolic representations of hope should you be willing.

The dialogue will be audiotaped and transcribed by the interviewer, Carol Gill. All information shared between us will be kept very confidential. Your real name will not be used in this study and all identifying data which could be used to link you with a specific quote will be removed (unless you indicate a preference for being associated with the quote).

This project is being done through the University of Lethbridge. Should you desire more information about this research, please feel free to contact either myself, Carol Gill; the Project Supervisor, Dr. Leah Fowler (403) 329-2457; or the Human Subjects Chair, Dr. Keith Roscoe (403) 329-2446.

This research may or may not have specific benefit for you. It is hoped that the opportunity for authentic dialogue and an understanding that you have made a contribution to a much needed area of research will be satisfying.

Carol Gill  
(Address and phone number given.)

## INFORMED CONSENT

### Pine Lake Tornado

I understand I am being asked to participate in a study entitled, "Finding Hope in Tragedy: People in Crisis", the purpose of which is to gain some insight into how one finds, sustains, and re-builds hope in the face of tragedy.

I further understand I will be asked to share my Pine Lake Tornado story (as much as I am comfortable with), experiences, observations, and understandings that come from my own experiences and education, and to engage in a dialogue with the researcher. I understand that there may be more than one dialogue and that the dialogues will be recorded. I understand I will be invited to share other written, artistic, or concrete representations of hope. I will also be asked to complete a brief questionnaire regarding my current level of hope.

I can expect to be communicated with in a respectful manner throughout this study. I am guaranteed that all of my conversations will remain confidential and that my name will not be used in the final document of this study unless I request it to be. Should any quotation from our dialogue be used in the final presentation, I understand it will be reported in such a way as to respect my anonymity.

I may also choose to opt out of the dialogues at any time without penalty. Although the risks of distress are very low, I understand the researcher can provide support and could, if I requested, provide an appropriate referral.

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions and to clarify any concerns.

I understand there may be no specific benefit to myself, and that I will not be paid for my participation.

I understand this study is being completed by Carol Gill, a graduate student from the University of Lethbridge under the supervision of a professor, Dr. Leah Fowler from said university.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer's Signature

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Pine Lake Tornado Survivors**

- Hope most often happens in the context of difficult circumstances.  
Having the experience of the Pine Lake Tornado is such a circumstance.  
Can you give me a sense of what happened and how your life is similar or different since the tornado?
- Tell me of any specific incidents/vignettes/things that stand out as influencing your hope.
- Tell me your perceptions of what strengthens or diminishes your hope.
- How do you account for the hope you have?  
Has hope been a constant in your life? (Are you a hopeful person?)
- If your hope has been influenced by someone, who would that be?
- If I wanted to know about your hope, what would I need to understand or know about you?
- If someone feeling without hope were to ask you what gives you hope, how would you answer them?
- How has hope helped you through this tornado experience?
- When you think of hope what words come to mind?
- If you were to draw or photograph hope, what pictures come to mind?

### **Closure**

- Is there anything you would like to add that I, for some reason, have not touched on?
- What was it like for you to participate in this interview?
- Are there any questions that you feel I might add in order to understand hope further

\*Adapted with permission from: Jevne, R. F., Williamson, H. & Stechynsky, A. (1999.)  
The Minerva Dialogues: Hope and Chronic Conditions. Edmonton: The Hope Foundation of Alberta.

## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

### **Teachers**

The purpose of this study is to further understand the experience of hope. Although hope is considered essential to healing, quality living, and life itself, there is little shared understanding of what it is exactly and how one finds, sustains, and re-builds hope.

The reason for this study is to attempt to understand the role hope plays in a life-threatening situation such as the Pine Lake Tornado. By entering into dialogue with a series of people who have different perspectives and experiences of the same crisis situation, common themes and patterns are expected to emerge. In understanding how survivors of the tragedy were able to maintain their sense of hope, it is my intent to apply such findings to teachers in crisis. Perhaps if we can discover how others have sustained, re-built, and searched for hope-giving strategies in the face of tragedy, we can assist burned out individuals in the teaching profession in maintaining hopeful attitudes thus keeping them a healthy and vital part of the education system. While the intent of this study is to focus such hope-sustaining strategies use by tornado survivors on teachers in crisis, the information could be very useful for anyone involved in a critical situation.

Should you participate you will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire concerning your current perception of the stress involved in your current teaching situation and a survey of the kinds of incidents that you would deal with in the school year that could be perceived as causing stresses as well as any coping strategies you employ as a result of these incidents to care for yourself.

The survey will be analyzed by the interviewer, Carol Gill. All information shared between us will be kept very confidential. Your real name will not be used in this study and all identifying data which could be used to link you with a specific quote will be removed (unless you indicate a preference for being associated with the quote).

This project is being done through the University of Lethbridge. Should you desire more information about this research, please feel free to contact either myself, Carol Gill; the Project Supervisor, Dr. Leah Fowler (403) 329-2457; or the Human Subjects Chair, Dr. Keith Roscoe (403) 329-2446.

This research may or may not have specific benefit for you. It is hoped that the opportunity for authentic dialogue and an understanding that you have made a contribution to a much needed area of research will be satisfying.

Carol Gill  
3 Gilmore Avenue  
Red Deer, Alberta  
T4P 3L6  
Phone: (403) 343-3463

## INFORMED CONSENT

### Teachers

I understand I am being asked to participate in a study entitled, "Finding Hope in Tragedy: People in Crisis", the purpose of which is to gain some insight into how one finds, sustains, and re-builds hope in the face of tragedy.

I further understand I will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire on my current perception of the stress involved in teaching in my current teaching position. I will also be asked to complete a brief survey of the kinds of incidents that I would deal with in the school year that could be perceived as causing stress as well as any coping strategies I employ as a result of these incidents to care for myself.

I can expect to be communicated with in a respectful manner throughout this study. I am guaranteed that all of my conversations will remain confidential and that my name will not be used in the final document of this study unless I request it to be. Should any quotation from the survey be used in the final presentation, I understand it will be reported in such a way as to respect my anonymity.

I may also choose to opt out of the survey at any time without penalty. Although the risks of distress are very low, I understand the researcher can provide support and could, if I requested, provide an appropriate referral.

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions and to clarify any concerns.

I understand there may be no specific benefit to myself, and that I will not be paid for my participation.

I understand this study is being completed by Carol Gill, a graduate student from the University of Lethbridge under the supervision of a professor, Dr. Leah Fowler from said university.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer's Signature



**INTERVIEW/SURVEY FIELD NOTES**

Code Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview/Survey Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview/Survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Interview/Survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview/Survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Interview/Survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Interviewee:

Reflections of the Interviewer: observations, insights, feelings, hunches.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Problem Survey**

Put an [X] in the box to the right that best describes how much that problem has bothered you during the past month.

0 - Not at all    1 - Slightly    2 - Moderately    3 - A lot

\*Adapted from the Burns Anxiety & Depression Checklist  
David, D. Burns, 1984. "The Feeling Good Handbook."

	0	1	2	3		0	1	2	3
1. Difficulty concentrating.					19. Trouble making up your mind about things.				
2. Feeling resentful and angry a good deal of the time.					20. Having no appetite or else overeating and bingeing.				
3. Difficulty remembering things.					21. Excessively tired and sleeping too much.				
4. Feeling that you're on the verge of losing control.					22. Worry a great deal about your health.				
5. Concerns about looking foolish/inadequate in front of others.					23. Have thoughts that life is not worth living.				
6. Fears of criticism or disapproval.					24. Suffer from insomnia and can't get a good night's sleep.				
7. Butterflies or discomfort in the stomach.					25. Loss of interest in your career, hobbies, family, or friends.				
8. Frequent headaches or pains in the neck, back, or shoulder.					26. Dread going to work.				
9. Restlessness or jumpiness.					27. Overwhelmed with paper work and "paper blizzard".				
10. Tight, tense muscles.					28. Lack of resources and supplies.				
11. Feeling tired, weak, or easily exhausted.					29. Anxiety when dealing with administration or supervisor.				
12. Feeling of being old and unattractive.					30. Heavy workload.				
13. Feeling overwhelmed and have to force yourself to do things.					31. Uncomfortable with teaching assignment.				
14. Feeling sad or down in the dumps.					32. Discipline problems.				
15. The future looks bleak or hopeless.					33. Lack of administrative support.				
16. Feeling worthless or that you are a failure.					34. Lack of control in many school processes.				
17. Critical of yourself or blaming yourself for everything.					35. Feeling isolated.				
18. Feeling inadequate or inferior to others.					36. Equipment breakdowns.				

**STRESS SURVEY**

**Instructions: Put an [X] in the space to the right that best describes how much stress that problem has caused you during the past month. In the "Yes/No" columns, please indicate whether you intentionally engaged in a positive or healthy activity to counteract the situation and your feelings regarding it. (Examples: walking, hot bath, exercise, music, reading, playing with pet/children, self talk, etc.). If so, please indicate what the activity was.**

**0 - No stress at all      1 - Somewhat stressful      2 - Moderately Stressful      3 - Very stressful**

	0	1	2	3	Yes	No	Describe
1. Not enough time to complete work load.							
2. Little control over decision-making.							
3. Lack of administrative support/understanding.							
4. Little job security.							
5. Limited photocopying.							
6. Undesirable teaching assignment.							
7. Discipline problems.							
8. Supervision schedule.							
9. Work through scheduled breaks/lunch hours.							
10. Phone calls home/parent meetings re: problem children.							
11. Teaching outside subject/speciality area.							
12. Children without breakfast/lunch.							
13. Lack of funding, resources, or supplies.							
14. Difficult relations with admin. or co-workers.							
15. School extracurricular expectations.							
16. Excessive paperwork/record keeping.							
17. Pressures or reporting periods.							