

Tips for community coordinators regarding psychological and emotional reactions

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1/ Importance of verbalisation:

The opportunity to freely verbalise one's thoughts is essential. This must take as long as it takes, even if you feel a sense of repetition and of going over the same things again and again, with a certain lack of order. This is a normal way to eliminate stress, absorb information (so that it can be reformulated in one's own words), review situations and the past, try to understand and make some sense of what has happened and how one is feeling today.

2/ Predictable emotional reactions:

The revelations of certain facts can come as a shock to some people; they can receive these revelations as a shock or an attack, against themselves and their identity as a group and an individual. As a result, they will adopt defensive attitudes (known as "defence mechanisms" in psychology):

-**Shock**, inability to react.

-**Denial**: "no, it's not possible", because it's unthinkable.

-**Anger** (against the community coordinators, journalists, against the victims "who exaggerate or are a threat to us") As a means of diverting "blame" onto others.

3/ Other emotions:

-**Depression, sadness, disappointment**. It's like a "process of grieving". Feeling of having "lost" something very important, a guiding principle, a part of oneself.

-**Anguish; loss of security and certainty**: "What will become of us? What's going to happen?"

-**Shame, feeling of guilt**: people who lived through the periods mentioned in the report, who didn't notice any problem with Fr Finet's attitude, may feel guilt, a sense of having colluded, to the point of even imagining having "participated" in the deviances, or allowed them to happen and not having done anything to prevent it. It is important to accept this feeling of

guilt, which is a sign of the way in which an individual re-examines their own attitude and subjective positioning. You should not be too quick to find excuses, ("you had nothing to do with it"). This could skip certain steps in the healing process.

You can support the person by helping them to express themselves: "What do you think you could have done at the time? What did you think/feel at the time?" ». This also helps to make a connection with the collective responsibility, we are responsible together, we can examine ourselves as a group and individually.

All these emotional reactions are normal, they can occur at different times for a particular individual. They can be contradictory (e.g. switching between anger and self-accusation), and the process is not necessarily linear. It's important to let them express themselves and permit emotional reactions. There is no "right" conduct, "good reaction", or "good" or "bad" emotion. Any emotional reaction must be welcomed, as a first step in helping them to move forwards later on.

Subsequently, it will be helpful to start visualising the way ahead in order to build the future, continue to build up the community together and rediscover what unites us. Although it isn't possible right away and it may be rejected, we can try to put it into perspective, as a way of understanding the difficulties of the current situation as a means of going further and of self-renewal. It is a means of making sense of the situation, and what makes sense helps you move forwards and get through the difficulty.

4/ Particular vulnerability of certain people

Some people may be more vulnerable than others, because of their personal history, possibly because of sexual abuse in their childhood for example, or other kinds of violence or control, in a religious context for example. Emotions and memories from the past – sometimes way back in the past – can be awakened. We must always be mindful of the way in which we speak in a group about the victims mentioned in the commission's report, because this can be very distressing for someone who has experienced this type of situation. For example, if someone reacts angrily in an assembly or group against the victims, like the aforementioned defence mechanisms, we can say to the group, "You have the right to be angry because you are suffering and you don't understand what is happening, but the victims have the right to our respect". It is important that everyone can hear.

And, of course, it will be crucial to welcome anyone who needs to talk about experiences of abuse or violence, to be alert to any warning signs or calls for help, which are not necessarily expressed in a clear and direct way.