

TSN News

Newsletter of the Tsunami Support Network

Co-ordinated by



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March 2005

Welcome to TSN News

Welcome to this first newsletter for people affected by the Tsunami Disaster.

This newsletter is part of the Tsunami Support Network, which has been set up to help provide opportunities for support for people in the UK affected by the South East Asian Earthquake and Tsunami.

As well as our website (<http://www.tsunamisupportnetwork.org.uk>) and ongoing telephone support (0845 054 7474), we hope this newsletter will enable readers to obtain and contribute information, share common experiences and benefit from mutual support.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** Welcome to TSN News
- 1** About the TSN
- 2** National memorial Service
- 2** Tsunami Memorial Service Support Line
- 2** Other Commemorative Activities
- 2** Tsunami Support Online: Useful Links
- 3** Tsunami Support Online: Information Leaflets
- 3** Psychological Support
- 4** Dealing with the Tsunami: A Personal Account

About the TSN

The Tsunami Support network is being coordinated by the British Red Cross and funded by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

It continues the work begun in the aftermath of the Disaster, which included providing practical and emotional support and first aid at UK airports, setting up a telephone support line and deploying support teams to Bangkok and Phuket.

The activities of the Tsunami Support Network include a website and telephone support line (0845 054 7474). This number is open during office hours and includes an answer phone service.

We are also planning information meetings, which will provide an opportunity for people to come together to meet each other and participate in the setting up of self-help support groups. We will send information about these to people who formally join the Network.

How to Join the Network

We are encouraging people to join the Network by registering their contact details with us. You can do this either on the website or by calling us on the support line number above. Please pass on details of the network to anyone who you feel might benefit from its activities.

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WWW.TSUNAMISUPPORTNETWORK.ORG.UK
EMAIL: TSUNAMISUPPORTNETWORK@REDCROSS.ORG.UK
SUPPORT NETWORK ANSWER SERVICE 0845 054 7474

National Memorial Service

The Dept of Culture, Media & Sport has announced that a National Memorial Service for the UK victims of the Asian Tsunami is to take place on Wednesday 11 May at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

As well as remembering the UK victims, the service will also recognize the huge suffering endured by all the countries affected and the overwhelming humanitarian response. Representatives of communities in the UK with close ties with the countries affected by the disaster, as well as faith communities, and the relief agencies involved, will also be present.

Tsunami Memorial Service Support Line

The Red Cross has set up an additional Tsunami Memorial Service Support Line to respond to queries relating to the Memorial Service.

The telephone number is **0845 054 7499** (this number includes an answer phone service).

The aim of the helpline is to provide emotional support and information for bereaved families and others who may have queries relating to the Memorial Service.

It can provide information about arrangements for the day as well as advice about protocols etc. The Support Line also offers emotional support and can refer callers on to other appropriate support services responding to the tsunami.

Other Commemorative Activities

As well as this official memorial service, there may be other commemorative activities taking place. We will keep you updated as we hear about these.

Please let us know if you have information to share about events you are involved with or participating in.

Tsunami Support Online: Useful Links

There are a number of discussion forums online which are enabling people to share their experiences and feelings about the tsunami and its impact. These include:

<http://www.tsunamistories.net/> - this site will offer tsunami survivors and the bereaved the chance to tell their stories and share their pictures and messages.

<http://www.tcf.org.uk/> - The Compassionate Friends has a series of online discussion forums on its website offering bereavement support. There are currently discussion forums for parents, for grandparents and for siblings. These provide opportunities for anyone to write about themselves, their experiences & their feelings so that others in similar circumstances can make contact through email. People who have been affected by the tsunami have contacted TCF.

<http://www.uktsunamifamilies.com/forum/> - This website and discussion forum has been set up by and for those affected by the tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean on 26th December 2004. This site is meant for bereaved relatives more than survivors, though anyone is welcome to access it.

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Tsunami Support Online – contd.

Information leaflets

There are many resources on the Internet that may be helpful, but sometimes it is difficult to know where to find them. If you have found useful information on a website we haven't mentioned please let us know.

We have learned about a couple of brochures on the Compassionate Friends website that are designed to help siblings and those around them understand the unique aspects of their grief. One focuses in particular on adult grief. You can find these at http://www.compassionatefriends.org/tcf_siblings_resources.shtml

Psychological Support

The FCO is offering funding for psychological support through its package of assistance. This assistance is available to UK citizens who have been bereaved or are survivors from the tsunami. It includes funding for specialist psychological support should this not be available directly through the GP. The referral must however be made by the GP and be to an accredited specialist (e.g. a trauma counsellor).

The FCO package includes up to £600 funding for such psychological support per individual. Invoices may be sent by the counsellor directly to Ian Hester at FCO Crisis Management Team, Room G/99, Old Admiralty Building, London SW1A 2AH. A copy of the GP's referral must accompany the first invoice.

Contributing to TSN News

Some people find it helpful to write about their experiences and feelings. If you might be interested in writing articles, stories, poems or letters for this newsletter, please write to us.

We are happy to receive anything up to 500 words and will discuss drafts with you

Dealing with the Tsunami: A Personal Account

Sasha Pagella was in Penang, Malaysia when the tsunami hit. He has written an account of his experience on the website: www.tsunamistories.net. Below he talks about his feelings since then and what has helped: -

Three weeks on - it still hasn't really sunk in and while I've shed a few tears when I've been on my own I haven't really been able to let go and cry properly though I can feel the emotion at times welling up till it's almost unbearable but for some reason I can't let it go. While the logical part in me tells me I probably did what I could to help other people when the wave hit. I can't switch off the emotional side where I still feel I could have done more.

I also feel guilt at being back in the UK where I'm far removed from all the destruction while those most affected have to live with it & then I feel guilty about feeling guilty in that so many people have lost far more than me. Despite having donated money and clothes I feel inadequate and have a real urge to do more.

Since returning when I'm on my own or completing a routine task I feel a loss of focus and seem quite forgetful, often finding myself in a sort of trance where everything seems a bit of a blur and it can take quite an effort to snap out of. However I have been assured that what I'm

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- CONTD. FROM PAGE 3

Dealing with the Tsunami: A Personal Account

feeling is quite normal for someone that has experienced an abnormal event. While talking about my experiences and feelings help I feel a strong need to meet and talk with other people directly affected.

17th March 05

Soon after writing the above section I read a small article in a newspaper referring to a web site <http://www.tsunamistories.net/> that had been set up by a father called Alan Cox who had lost one of his daughters, Leanne, in the tsunami. The sites aim is to provide other people affected by the tragedy with the opportunity to share their experiences with each other via a message & storyboard as well as a photo gallery.

I personally found the site very enabling and felt comfortable sharing my experiences and feelings with people. I believe it has played an important part in helping me move on, at least in terms of getting over my feelings of guilt. I still feel a bit flat but am no longer depressed, however I don't feel I'm back to my old self yet and guess this will take some time but perhaps I've turned the corner? I'm keen to get my spark back and start enjoying life again.

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Journalist Request

Zest Magazine (a health & wellbeing magazine for women) is interested in speaking with a woman in her 20s or 30s who survived the tsunami about how it has affected her life. If interested contact the TSN for more info.

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In case it helps anyone the emotional states I've gone through in order:

1. Shock followed shortly after by a sense that everything felt surreal as if I was almost dreaming
2. Dawning realisation of what I & thousands of others had been through
3. Guilt & depression (up till mid February)
4. Feeling mentally & physically exhausted (up till beginning of March)
5. Feeling flat but calm & also a sense of hope and perhaps some glimmer of the old me.

Apart from crying the morning after the tsunami I haven't been able to cry about it since. Despite feeling an overwhelming urge at times something would just shut down in me & as soon as a few tears started to spill out they'd stop.

I feel more at peace with myself and accepting of what happened but would still like to meet other people who experienced the tsunami face to face as all the people I was with at the time live in other countries and those that I saw killed were from Malaysia.'

Community Recovery Programmes

A number of people have asked us if information is available on how the directly affected communities are recovering. If you have information or contacts that may help us please let us know and we will pass details on.

Talking to the Media

The media occasionally contacts us with requests for interviews with people affected by the tsunami. If you might be interested in this please contact us.