



My View

It's a GIFT

I know a TIP leader who every time he talks about TIP, he talks about the "gift" that TIP Volunteers have to help others. He goes on to say that all the training in the world can't train citizens do what TIP Volunteers do.

To be honest, I have not really focused until now on the "gift" possessed by TIP volunteers. Most of my focus has been on training citizens to be effective TIP Volunteers, supervising them so that they maintain their competence and putting procedures in place to ensure their safety. But I think that the above mentioned TIP Leader who talks about TIP Volunteers as having a gift is absolutely right.

Anyone who has listened to TIP Volunteers share TIP Calls they have responded to has heard what I call the "TIP Magic." I am continually amazed at how TIP Volunteers are able to respond to complex, changing and tragic situations in ways that makes it look easy. I've often scratched my head at continuing education meetings thinking "how did she come up with THAT?" Is it the TIP Training? Is it the TIP policies and procedures?

Although what the TIP organization does to train and support volunteers is important, I believe it only responsible for a small part of the magic that TIP Volunteers work on emergency scenes. Most of the wonderful work that volunteers do springs from their "gift". I call this mysterious talent the "gift of compassion".

I believe that Citizens are already 90% on their way to becoming TIP Volunteers before they even walk in the door on the first night of training. Why? They already have the "gift of compassion".

What are the implications for our organization of appreciating the gift of compassion? Here are a few thoughts....

.....TIP Volunteers should pause occasionally and be grateful for their "gift of compassion". I believe this gift is rare.

.....TIP Leaders should be grateful that people in our communities with "the gift of compassion" are willing to use that gift in our organization.

.....We should all be very humbled by the fact that TIP Volunteers come to us with a gift that has been given to them. TIP plays only a small role by helping our volunteers give the gift of compassion expression.

.....We need to continue to recruit citizens who have the "gift" regardless of age, education, ethnicity. Also, we need to accept the fact that not everyone has the "gift", and that we will always have the challenge of recruiting enough volunteers to do the job.

.....We need to be careful not to stifle our TIP volunteers' gifts with unnecessary requirements, policies or procedures.

Finally, from the founding days of TIP and throughout the years we have had many "professional helpers" (social workers, chaplains etc.) question the competence of TIP Volunteers. They observe that most TIP Volunteers don't have advanced degrees in counseling and many don't have college degrees at all. Some naysayers ask: "*what makes TIP Volunteers capable of helping others in crisis?*" We know the answer...our volunteers have the "gift of compassion". It's a gift that many, including many professional helpers, don't have.

An organization filled with people who have the gift of compassion is unstoppable. TIP Volunteers will continue to work magic on emergency scenes. Those who support the TIP organization will see this magic and will say "*WOW this is an organization I want to support. This is an organization I want to be involved in!*"

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