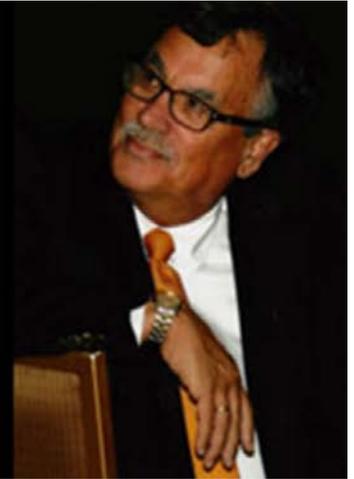


# MY VIEW



Founder Wayne Fortin



## GETTING TO WOW

I have been doing a lot of traveling in the last few months, and quite a few times I was asked what many travelers ask each other: "So what do you do?" Of course, I reply by giving my brief elevator talk about TIP. The usual response: blank stares, maybe an "oh" or silence.

Although I've gotten these blank stares for years I'm still frustrated by my inability to communicate my love for TIP and to elicit WOW responses from others. I still half expect the responses to my description of TIP to be something like *"WOW, what a terrific program."*

But no... just oh's, stares and silence.

I have come to realize that TIP takes lots of time and 'close up' experience for people to really appreciate what we do. A 5-minute explanation about TIP, as powerful as it may be, just doesn't get others to WOW or even close.

Even for those with lots of experience with TIP it takes time to fully appreciate the program. For example, TIP volunteers who've gone through the training academy and the 3-month field training period often say they didn't really get TIP until THAT ONE CALL. Also, I've talked to spouses of TIP volunteers who've lived with a TIP volunteer for years who did not fully appreciate TIP until they attended a TIP event.

I have come to realize (reluctantly) that appreciating TIP is an ongoing process. Even after 33 years I appreciate new aspects of the program almost daily and my understanding of what we do and its impact deepens as time goes on.

Why does it take so darn long for people to really get what most of us consider a "no brainer?" Because to the outside observer there is nothing WOW about TIP. Not surprisingly, the need for TIP and the impact we have on survivors is not obvious to the casual observer. To really appreciate TIP, one needs an understanding of the following...

- How tragedy disables those affected.
- How important it is for long term healing for survivors to have a positive immediate aftermath experience.

- How the emergency system works and why responders don't have the time to be the comforters.
- How ill-equipped family members and friends are to help the survivors of tragedy they encounter.
- How just "*being with*" a survivor of tragedy has a very powerful healing effect.

Most people who are not immersed in TIP do not understand these aspects of trauma and the emergency system, nor should we expect them to understand. It's not part of their everyday lives. I am not advocating that we stop speaking about TIP nor that we stop refining our elevator speeches.

What I am saying is....

- Recognize that for a person to really appreciate TIP is a long process. Don't be hard on yourself thinking that if only has a better explanation or *the "magic words"* that that would elicit WOW.
- The best way to give people a "*WOW, I get it now*" experience about TIP is by having TIP volunteers and clients share TIP calls (without the identifying info, of course).
- We need to appreciate and spend our time working with those few who really are passionate about TIP rather than trying to get everyone to become a believer.
- Although it sometimes takes even TIP volunteers a few calls to get to WOW, they will eventually. That's why TIP volunteers are our most precious resource...they get TIP and will work tirelessly on the organization's behalf.

In summary, for those of us who want to spread the word about TIP and make everyone a "believer" patience and persistence are key. It's not easy to get others to appreciate TIP as we do. It takes time (lots of time) and storytelling. Others need to hear stories from our clients and volunteers about what we do and its impact. Our goal should be to develop a few passionate TIP champions and not to let the blank stares, the "oh's" and the indifference of some discourage us.