

# MY VIEW



*Founder Wayne Fortin*



## THE EMOTIONAL BOOST

All of us in TIP are frustrated that we can't be out in the field in person helping traumatized survivors. That is what we do, what we are well trained to do, and what we will do in the future. One of the ways we continue to help survivors is through Tele TIP. I'd like to suggest an additional way.

My suggestion starts with the fact that our entire nation has been traumatized. Something sudden and unexpected has appeared and has caused terrible harm in people's lives. We have experienced a societal trauma involving death, job loss, financial hardship and forced isolation. No one has been spared. According to Gallup, Americans are experiencing the sharpest drop in perceived well-being on record. There is no doubt there is a mental health crisis in this country.

Because survivors of trauma now include all of us, opportunities to provide emotional first aid to others abound. While TIP volunteers are accustomed to helping survivors identified by emergency responders, those who can benefit by our emotional first aid are now right in front of us ... the UPS driver, the cashier, our friend who lives alone, coworkers, family members....We now have the opportunity to offer one another the psychic care that we used to farm out to professionals.

Unfortunately, the skills we use in normal times to help survivors (emotional first aid) won't work in this new reality. There are too many who need our emotional care and we don't have 2 or 3 hours to "TIP" them. In many instances we encounter people in passing, and we only have 5 seconds or less to communicate with them.

So, what can we do or say to quickly provide those who are hurting emotional first aid? Is there something we can do or say to give them a positive emotional energy boost? I believe the answer is yes! I call what we can do providing an **Emotional Boost**. An **Emotional Boost** does just what it says. It gives others an emotional "pick me up". It's not a "cure" and it won't take away peoples' real problems. But hopefully it will make those problems a little easier to endure.

Because of job loss and social isolation many people these days are feeling disconnected from others, and they are struggling to feel that they have strengths and are a contributing member of society. The **Emotional Boost** addresses these debilitating feelings. When we provide an Emotional

Boost, we aim to communicate to those we encounter that ***“I notice you. You are not alone”*** and ***“I recognize and appreciate something(s) that is very good and worthwhile about you!”***  
***“I notice you + I notice something wonderful about you” = Emotional Boost***

The first part of our verbal emotional boost (noticing others) is simple but not easy. It is simply letting the other know that we notice them by giving them a wave, a thumbs up, a greeting, or a smile. The reason this letting others know that we notice them is not easy, and we don't do it (at least as much as we could) is that we are too self-absorbed. We walk around with blinders not noticing those around us, especially strangers. So our first task as emotional boosters is to simply to commit to noticing those around us and greeting them verbally or non-verbally. There is nothing complicated about this first step in emotional boosting. It is just a matter of doing it.

The second part of the **Emotional Boost** is more challenging...to recognize and comment upon another's strength/talent/contribution... their gardening, their bright red tennis shoes, their smile, their fast walk up hills, their putting out free bouquets in their driveways. This ability to see the good in others is also simple but not easy. We have to train ourselves to observe the uniqueness, talents, contributions and strengths of others. Here are suggestions for seeing the strength of others: focus on HOW others are doing what they are doing (passionately, generously, effortlessly, quietly, persistently...); don't take what others are doing for granted (i.e. *“he's just doing his job”*); and be aware of how others are making your life a little better (*“You are funny. You make me laugh.”*)

But seeing others strengths is not enough. We need to verbalize what we see. We need to say it *“You are very good at \_\_\_\_\_ . You are amazing!”*

Here are examples of Emotional Boosts I was either the recipient or the provider of. Note they all had the 2 essential characteristics of an effective Emotional Boost...a greeting of another + an appreciation of an individual for an extraordinary effort, a personal characteristic, a strength, a talent or a contribution...

- *“Good job”* ...said to me by a stranger as I walked briskly up a hill on my daily walk.
- *“Hi there. Your garden brightens up our neighborhood. Thanks!”* said by me to a neighbor as I walked by her on my daily walk.
- *“Just thought I'd email and say your talk helped me on my last Tele TIP call.”* ...said to me by a TIP volunteer.
- *“Thanks for the package. You have more energy than any UPS driver I've seen.”* .... said by me to a UPS driver.
- *“Thanks, people like you are keeping the country going.”* .... said by me to a Walmart employee.”
- *“Your voice is just right. You could have been a disc jockey”* ... said to me by a TIP volunteer.

These **Emotional Boosts** can be delivered throughout the day in person, by phone or by email. They can be stand-alone statements to a stranger or be folded into a long phone conversation with a friend.

For those of you who think these simple quick **Emotional Boosts** are “no big deal” and have little impact consider the following ....

- For people who are traumatized (all of us) little things make a big difference.
- Look at your own experience. I’m sure you’ll remember how an Emotional Boost made your day or maybe even your week.
- Remember when someone asked you about an aspect of your life. Remember how grateful you were simply that the person asked (*“Thanks for asking!”*)
- The lesson we have learned in TIP is that “ordinary” citizens can make a huge difference in the lives of others, often by doing virtually nothing.
- Acknowledge that if you are like most of us you are mostly focused on yourself, not others. Giving an emotional boost is a “big deal” because it requires getting out of ourselves and focusing on others. It means **being interested before being interesting**.

What I have noticed when I give an **Emotional Boost** is that I feel emotionally boosted myself. I believe giving an **Emotional Boost** is as good for the giver as it is for the receiver.

So while we wait for TIP to come back and provide our core service again, I suggest we give others **Emotional Boosts**. Of course, one doesn’t need to be a TIP volunteer to give emotional boosts. But as a “citizen helping citizen” organization we are in a unique position to take the lead and to serve as examples of Emotional Boosters. If all of our volunteers provided 5 emotional boosts daily, we would provide 630,000 boosts in the next 6 months. If you are saying to yourself *“I already do this”* ...Good! Now is the time for you to up your game!

I hasten to add that all the **Emotional Boosts** in the world won’t “cure” the suffering that comes with unemployment, hunger, loss of a family member and financial distress. But noticing others who are suffering and noticing something strong about them is SOMETHING, and it’s something we as TIP members can do.

Finally, there are TIP Emotional Boosters already among us. These are members of our organization who are always reaching out to tell the rest of us how good we are in some way. To those TIP Emotional Boosters, I say *“Thank you for emotionally nourishing us. Keep it up. We need you now more than ever.”*