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Introduction

When I see a boy and I would see every thing in the street, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helpers." To this day, especially in times of "disaster," I remember those words.

—Rogers (2003)

WHY THIS BOOK?

As a social work professor, I often tell my students that responding to someone at a point of vulnerability is a privilege. Being with someone when he or she is hurt, afraid, or alone requires a defined skill set, a capacity to be near human suffering, and a desire to make things better. Nowhere else is this more true than in the field of disaster preparedness and response, where "helpers" abound. Preparedness involves helping individuals, groups, and families take an active role in preventing harmful effects. Response means stepping in when preparedness was not enough, or the effects were too devastating to be handled on one's own. Both require a defined skill set and an appreciation that no disaster goes as planned.

Disasters affect millions of people each year across the globe, indifferent to age, race, socioeconomic status (SES), or level of preparedness. Ranging from small to large, they inhibit people's ability to function in their daily life due to physical and emotional damage. Disasters may be naturally sourced, such as ice storms, hurricanes, tsunamis, or earthquakes, or man-made, such as bombings, nuclear disasters, and shootings. Responders are faced with the task of helping pick up the pieces, whether that be physically in the form of medical aid, psychologically in the form of psychosocial support and therapeutic intervention, or even in concrete ways such as providing a meal, restoring electricity, or rebuilding a community. However, responding to a diverse population means