Mental Health Guidelines for Volunteers at Phoenix World Burn Congress

Thank you for taking time to volunteer with the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors and help bring Phoenix World Burn Congress to the burn community. We want you to be aware of the unique atmosphere that exists during Phoenix World Burn Congress. This is an amazing healing space for survivors who are in the midst of recovering from a burn injury and their caregivers, both personal and professional, who support them on their journey. Such a healing space may trigger strong emotions that at times may feel overwhelming to survivors. There are many people who help to create and hold the space for the healing process during the Congress, including those who have chosen to volunteer at this event.

Below are some suggestions of ways to respond to burn survivors who may be experiencing overwhelming emotions related to trauma and grief. As a volunteer, interacting with the survivors, you may also have strong feelings at some point during Phoenix WBC. We have included some suggestions for ways to take care of yourself during the Congress.

1. **Redirecting:** Direct survivors back to the breakout sessions and other program offerings at Phoenix WBC rather than trying to provide counseling to them. Redirecting responses such as:
   i. “You are in the right place to get help with this”
   ii. “Be sure to look at the list of breakout sessions and I am sure you will find just the right place to get answers to that”
   iii. “Many survivors find the open mic sessions particularly helpful”

   Staying calm and centered yourself helps others who are stressed or upset to move toward calmness.

2. **Notify the Mental Health Team:** The Phoenix Society has professional mental health providers on staff for Phoenix World Burn Congress. The Show Office will have a list of the mental health team members and who is on first call at any given time during Phoenix WBC. If a survivor seems too overwhelmed to be assisted by redirecting them back to the program, walk with them to the Show Office and ask the staff to contact the mental health team.

3. **Take Care of Yourself:** There may be times during the Phoenix WBC that you may feel overwhelmed and need assistance to process your own emotions so that you can
return effectively to your role in the Congress. Please return to the volunteer suite if you need a break! Further, please reach out to our volunteer coordinator or show office to connect you with a member of the mental health team.

The pace of Phoenix WBC can be very fast and demanding—be sure to take breaks for yourself, go outside even for a few moments, take some deep breaths, and in general take care of yourself physically, emotionally and mentally. If you take good care of yourself, you will also be in a better space to help others.