



Dear Rapid Response Team,

I would like to express my wholehearted gratitude and appreciation to Rapid Response Team. Two remarkable members of your team brought love and positivity to hundreds of wounded souls. Passion, professionalism and perseverance are the 3 P's that characterize these two inspiring ladies.

I would also like to thank Jonathan for his support. Although I was hoping to meet him face-to-face, his knowledge, expertise and passion are very evident. The stories that he shared during the PFA trainings moved us all, and motivated us to overcome any barriers we may face while talking to people on the field.

Since Susana and Grace had started volunteering on the field, they had shown tremendous love, support and kindness. Their professionalism and company are like no other. We feel like we've known them for years, even though we've known them for less than a month.

Their work started off discretely – as they were getting to meet the team, observe how the team works on the field, and take photos of the work that they're doing. Gradually, their work began to evolve to incredible acts, such as listening to the team, being a source of motivation to the team, and suggesting fruitful ideas related to the management of our emergency response.

As you can imagine, the impact of the Beirut explosion is unprecedented. With approximately 200 people being killed, more than 6,000 wounded, and 300,000 bereft of their homes, there are hundreds of thousands of souls inundated by grief, agony and despair. These feelings may last for months, years and possibly a lifetime. It is these feelings that Susana and Grace have been listening to.

Nonetheless, in the midst of this dismal reality lies a positive (meeting your team). We hope to continue collaborating with them (possibly through trainings, meetings, or follow up visits to Lebanon).

Rapid Response Team had taught us valuable lessons; they had exemplified that:

1. Language, geographical distance and culture are not barriers to spreading love. The biggest barrier to expressing love is one's own heart: you either open it to others or you keep it locked to yourself. Susana and Grace had chosen the first route.
2. Psychological first aid (PFA) extends far beyond completing assessments and listening. It's about empathy and good will. Susana and Grace had done more than PFA with the Beirut explosion survivors; they had listened to each person's story and helped people turn their weakness into their greatest strength.
3. Supporting the team can best be done by being a part of it. Being a part of the team is more than just getting tasks done on time; it's about losing yourself in the service of others. Rapid Response Team's volunteers would join the team on the field every day (Monday till Friday), and help them in whichever way they can to make their day flow more smoothly and efficiently.
4. Great ideas can emerge from talking to people and listening to their needs. You cannot respond to people's needs if your mind and heart do not act in synchrony. Listen to what your heart "feels" is right, and do what your mind "thinks" is needed.
5. The best PFA trainings emerge from people who speak about their own experiences. The three training workshops that Rapid Response Team had provided to our team (including psychologists, nurses, social workers, other specialists and volunteers) were exceptional. They inspired the team to go down to the field more, and to speak with their hearts and souls.

Subconsciously, these trainings provided hope to the team that it is possible to fill the cracks of a broken vase with gold. It is possible to convert once-broken vases into something more beautiful.

In short, I would like to re-iterate how grateful I am, the team is, and Restart Center is, to Rapid Response Team. We hope to continue collaborating with you, and to possibly meet some of your other professional team members. Knowing that the impact of the Beirut explosion is long-term, we aspire to have Susana and Grace extend their visit, or to continue collaborating with us through virtual or other means.

Best regards,
Sana Hamzeh
Clinical Advisor
Restart Center – Lebanon