

art: Dalia Sapon-Shevin

First Aid Concepts for Movement-Builders

an introduction to
bleeding control

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As community activists & organizers, we know so much about how to keep our people safe & protect each others' lives.

Bleeding control should be second nature to us too. But topics like this can seem overwhelming.

Let's use life skills we already know to make it easy to remember steps for bleeding control.

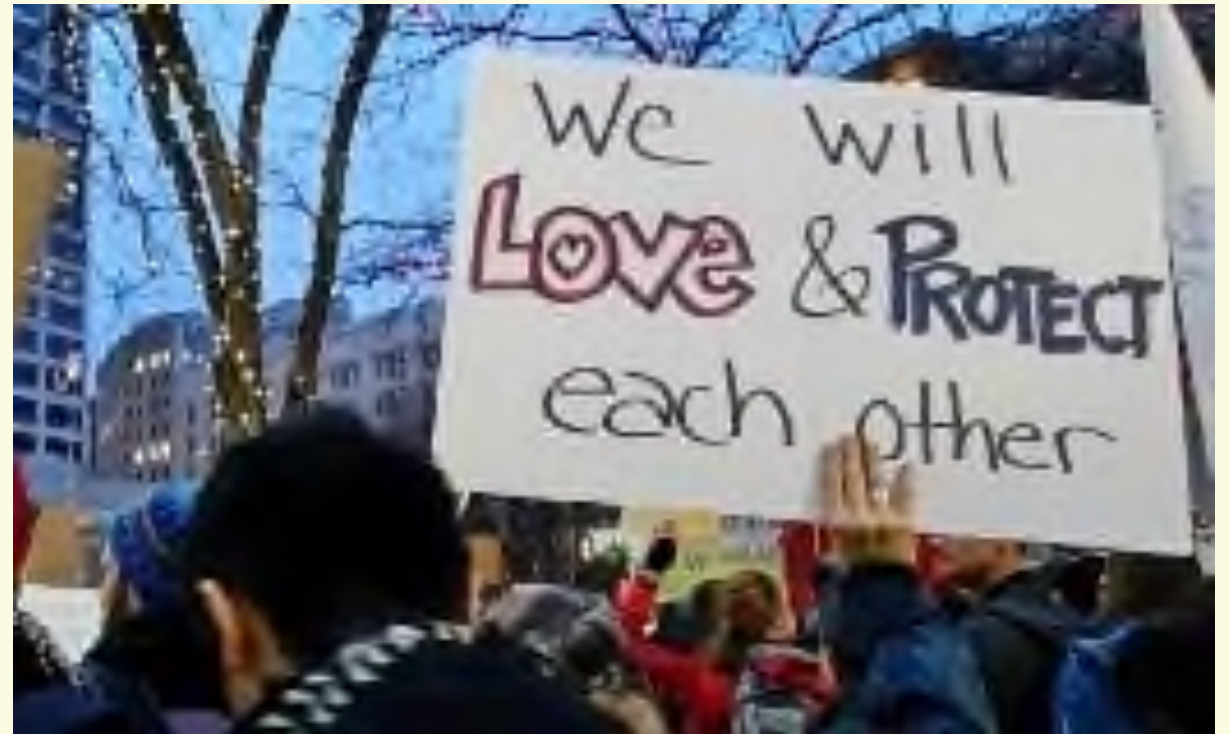


photo: Roberta Ray

Before we begin...

This isn't a 1st aid course. It's an introduction to the logic of how bleeding control works, so that any situation you find yourself in makes more sense to you. It's easier to remember steps when we understand why they work.

We're using metaphors about movement-building here because these ideas already make sense to many of us. Don't interpret these metaphors as precise truths about physiology. I'm not a physician or an expert in bleeding control – just an engaged volunteer. Since I may update or correct this, please share it as a **link**, not an attachment: aprilrosenblum.com/firstaid

For recommended classes & supplies, see last page.



Q: Why can we lose too much blood in just a few minutes?



A: Our hearts are powerful!

Our heart pushes blood so powerfully, it takes strength to hold it back. **Applying pressure** is the way we stop bleeding & help a healthy blood clot form.

When we have tools – like tourniquets, gauze & pressure bandages – **they** create pressure, freeing our hands up to do more. If you don't have tools, **hands alone can work.**

We don't wait for leaders to save us

Bleeding control is like social change. It works if regular people take action.

If someone's bleeding a lot, **call right away** for medical help. **But do not wait** for help to arrive.

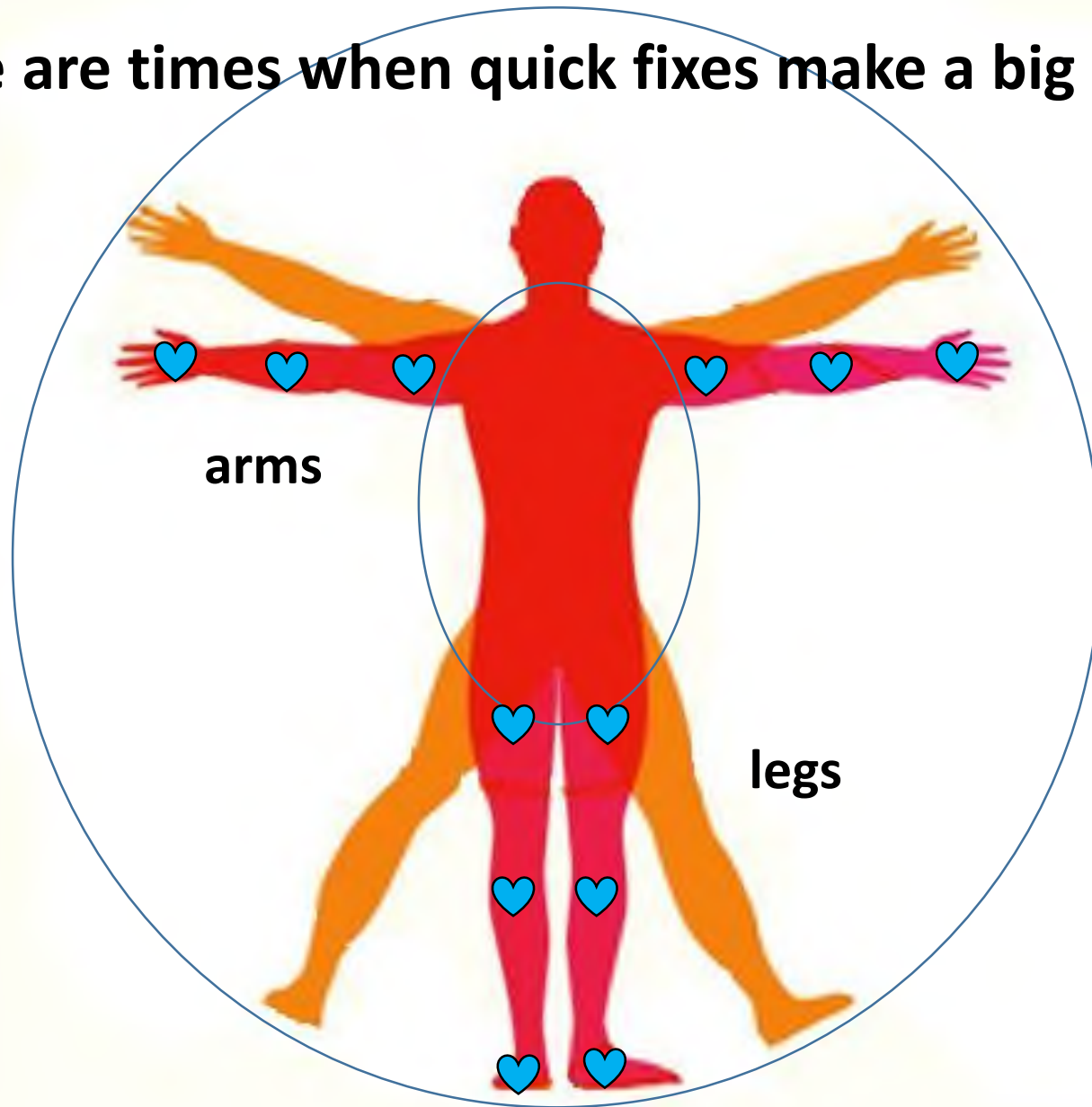
Start applying pressure immediately & **don't let up** until help arrives, or a new tool is ready.



There are times when quick fixes make a big difference.

When you scan someone for bleeding, check their **arms & legs** first.

It's easy to make a difference here.



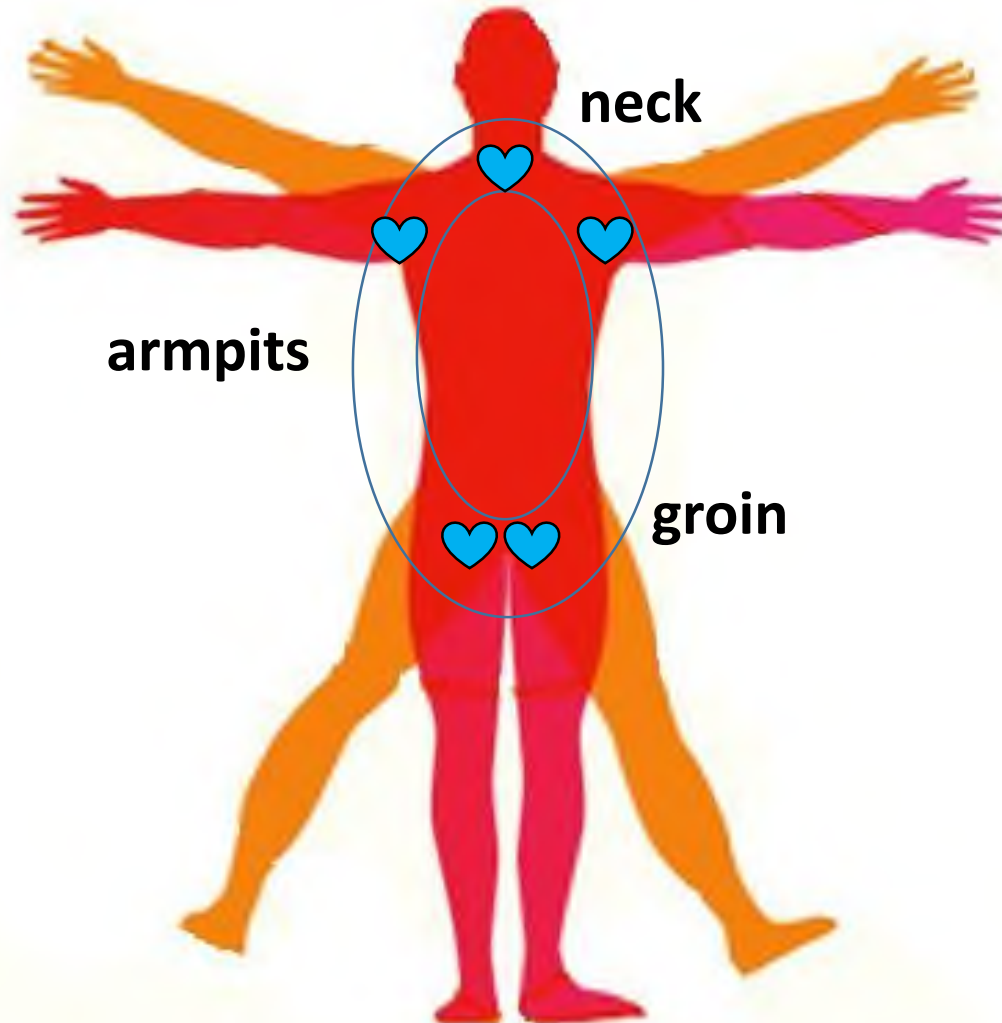
Many tools work on arms & legs.

- **apply pressure**
- ASAP if available: **commercial tourniquet(s)** as *tight* as possible; if bleeding continues add a 2nd one
- **wound packing**
- **DIY tourniquet** if necessary to free your hands

But the more “central” a problem is, the fewer quick fixes we have.

Points of connection to the body* include:

- neck
- armpits
- groin



At connection points to the body, use:

- wound packing
- direct pressure

*aka “junctional points”

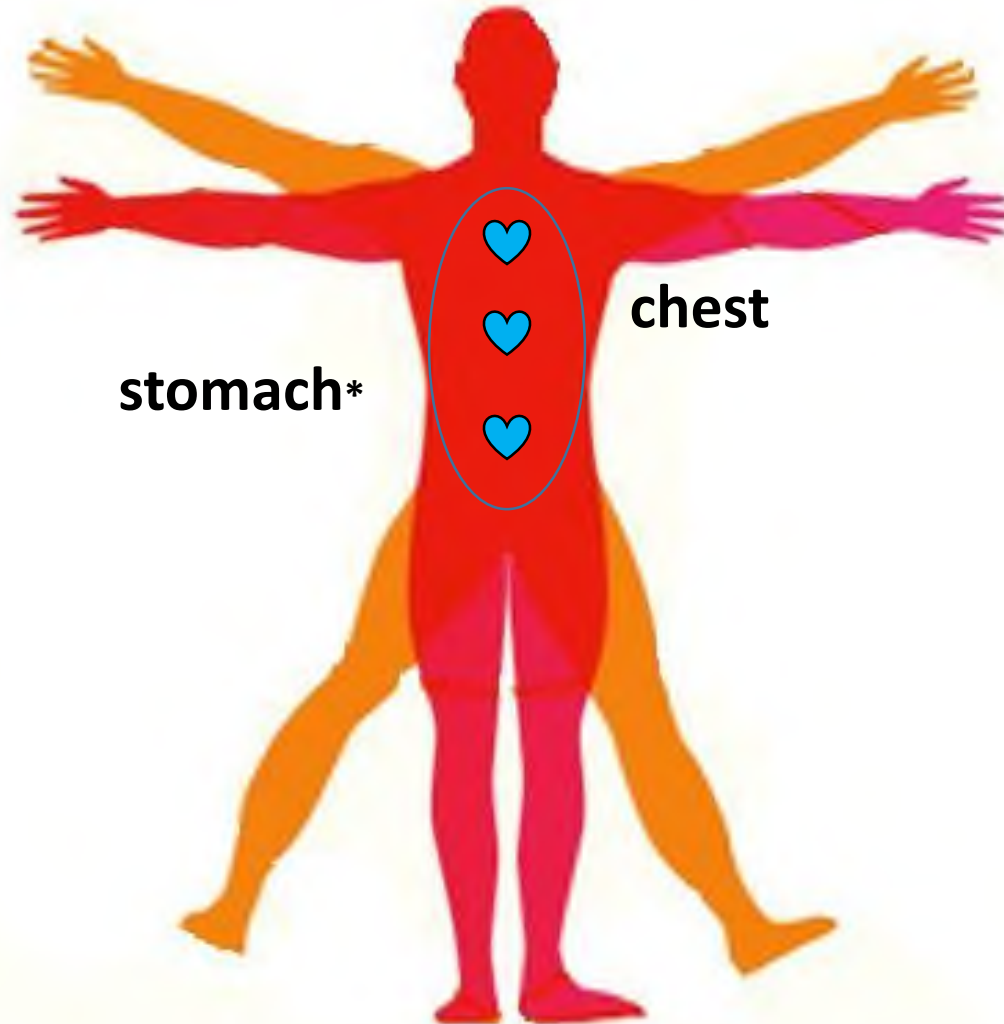
Problems that are central to the system need to be addressed in deeper ways.

Quick fixes for bleeding in the torso are limited.

We have **one main tool:**

- **direct pressure**

And we can cover chest wounds to keep air out.



Do use pressure...

But get this person higher level medical care ASAP.

*aka abdomen

Look for the root cause.

Don't be afraid to get messy. Stick your hand in an open wound (w/ gloves if you have them).

Feel for where blood is pulsing. That's the source of the problem.

Don't use "band-aid solutions" (ie, covering a wound w/ towels so you can't see where blood's coming from)...**if instead** you can find the pulsing vessel, **clamp it shut** with your fingers (press it against the bone, for example) or **aim gauze** right at the source of flow & **press** there.



Glossary & Tips:

Bleeding: To know if it bleeding is severe, picture a hose. If you turn a hose off, it might still trickle or drip for a while; that's minor bleeding. Severe bleeding is like a hose that's been **left on**: it doesn't stop; it might grow in a puddle, pour, or spray/spurt like a sprinkler.

Pressure: You can use your **fingers** (clamping a pulsing blood vessel shut), both **hands** (you can lean your full body weight into your hands while pushing against a wound), **gauze/fabric** (fill up the whole wound with it to create pressure) or a commercial or DIY pressure **bandage**. (After packing a wound & adding on extra material, you'll wrap a bandage, fabric, etc., tightly around the injured area & tuck or fasten it, so that it keeps on holding pressure after you let go.) Pressure – from a person or a tool – **needs to stay on until help arrives**.

Tourniquets: When an arm or leg is bleeding severely, tourniquets put pressure *between* the injury and the torso, so that blood can't get to the opening. Tourniquets are safe & important for severe bleeding, but should NOT be used for minor bleeding. Buy them commercially if possible, as DIY ones are not as good. Warn the person it will hurt – then place at least 2 inches closer to the torso & make *as tight as possible*. Note the time; it can safely be left on for hours. Even if it hurts, *never loosen or undo* – only a medical expert should do that.

Wound Packing: If you can fit a finger or two into a wound, you can pack it. Take gauze or clean fabric, ball up the end & push it into the deepest or most pulsing area of the wound. While keeping pressure on the gauze, feed more and more gauze into the wound, **until you can't fit any more in**. Then either keep holding pressure on the wound by hand, or add more material over it and bandage tightly around it so the bandage keeps up the pressure. Don't change bloody gauze; it needs to stay in place to form a clot. Just add on to it.

...Now sign up for a #StopTheBleed course!

Recommended 1st aid supplies:

Prices as of fall 2020

Things to order online:

I recommend buying multiples of everything if you can afford it. You may need more than one in an emergency, & if you have extra & can share it with others, everyone will be more prepared to care for each other.

- [Celox gauze](#) – Special gauze, *helps blood to clot* (aka hemostatic) – Price varies by size of package
- [Stretch, Wrap and Tuck \(SWAT-T\) tourniquet](#) – around \$11 USD
This has multiple uses (it can be a pressure bandage, too) and unlike most tourniquets, it will work for kids.
- [CAT Tourniquet](#) by North American Rescue – around \$30 USD

Things found at home or in local stores:

- Belt bag/waist pack – 1st aid is best carried on your body, not in a backpack, etc., which you might get separated from.
- Mylar blanket – Wrap this around someone to warm them as treatment for shock, a dangerous condition which can follow blood loss
- Small scissors (nail-scissors size, etc) – Cuts gauze/bandage material. Many 1st aid kits have one made for this.

Recommended Classes:

Tips here were compiled from #StopTheBleed classes taught by the Red Cross, First Care Providers & Prep Medic. Not all courses agree with each other, but they all will help you make a difference.

- [Red Cross](#) 30-minute online course – \$30
 - Clear & concise; designed to be memorable; less detailed explanations.
- [First Care Providers](#) free course
 - Still under an hour; requires a longer attention span; more in-depth explanations.

Learning bleeding control helps us to reject perfectionism.

When someone's bleeding severely, the only thing you can get wrong is to not act at all, or to wait too long. Let's get everyone we know to learn the basics of bleeding control, so no matter what happens, we can



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