

Taking Care of Your Emotional Health after a Disaster

Each positive action you take can help you feel better and more in control.

Disasters can bring about significant stress.

- This is especially true if you have experienced a previous disaster.
- The good news is that many people have experience coping with stressful life events and are naturally resilient—meaning we are designed to bounce back from difficult times.
- Here is some information on how to recognize your current feelings and tips for taking care of the emotional health of you, your family and your friends.

What you may be feeling now

When we experience a disaster or other stressful life event, we can have a variety of reactions, all of which can be common responses to difficult situations.

These reactions can include:

- Feeling physically and mentally drained.
- Having difficulty making decisions or staying focused on topics.
- Becoming easily frustrated on a frequent basis.



- Frustration occurring more quickly and more often.
- Arguing more with family and friends.
- Feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely or worried.
- Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns.

Most of these reactions are temporary and will go away over time. Try to accept whatever reactions you may have. Look for ways to take one step at a time and focus on taking care of your disaster-related needs and those of your family.

Taking action

Getting ourselves and our lives back in a routine that is comfortable for us takes time.



- Take care of your safety.** Find a safe place to stay and make sure your physical health needs and those of your family are addressed. Seek medical attention, if necessary.
- Eat healthy.** During times of stress, it is important that you maintain a balanced diet and drink plenty of water.
- Get some rest.** With so much to do, it may be difficult to have enough time to rest or get adequate sleep. Giving your body and mind a break can boost your ability to cope with the stress you may be experiencing.
- Stay connected with family and friends.** Giving and getting support is one of the most important things you can do.

- ❑ **Be patient with yourself and with those around you.** Recognize that everyone is stressed and may need some time to put their feelings and thoughts in order.
- ❑ **Set priorities.** Tackle tasks in small steps.
- ❑ **Gather information** about assistance and resources that will help you and your family members meet your disaster-related needs.
- ❑ **Stay positive.** Remind yourself of how you've successfully gotten through difficult times in the past. Reach out when you need support, and help others when they need it.

If you still don't feel better ...

Many people have experience coping with stressful life events and typically feel better after a few days. Others find that their stress does not go away as quickly as they would like and it influences their relationships with their family, friends and others.



If you find yourself or a loved one experiencing some of the feelings and reactions listed below for 2 weeks or longer, this may be a sign that you need to reach out for additional assistance.

- Crying spells or bursts of anger
- Difficulty eating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Losing interest in things
- Increased physical symptoms such as headaches or stomachaches

- Fatigue
- Feeling guilty, helpless or hopeless
- Avoiding family and friends

For additional resources, contact your local Red Cross Disaster Mental Health or community mental health professional.

Please seek immediate help if you or someone you know is feeling that life isn't worth living or if you are having thoughts of harming yourself or others. You can also contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at [1-800-273-TALK \(8255\)](tel:1-800-273-TALK) or SuicidePreventionLifeline.org.

Let Your Family Know You're Safe

If your community experiences a disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well Web site available through RedCross.org/SafeandWell to let your family and friends know about your welfare. If you don't have Internet access, call [1-866-GET-INFO](tel:1-866-GET-INFO) to register yourself and your family.



For more information on disaster and emergency preparedness, visit RedCross.org.