

After a Disaster: Self-Care Tips for Dealing with Stress

Things to Remember When Trying to Understand Disaster Events

- No one who sees a disaster is untouched by it.
- It is normal to feel anxious about your safety and that of your family.
- Profound sadness, grief, and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Acknowledging our feelings helps us recover.
- Focusing on your strengths and abilities will help you to heal.
- Accepting help from community programs and resources is healthy.
- We each have different needs and different ways of coping.

Signs That Adults Need Stress Management Assistance

- Difficulty communicating thoughts
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty maintaining balance
- Easily frustrated
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Limited attention span
- Poor work performance
- Headaches or stomach problems
- Tunnel vision or muffled hearing
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Disorientation or confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Reluctance to leave home
- Depression, sadness
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Mood-swings
- Crying easily
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Fear of crowds, strangers, or being alone

Ways to Ease the Stress

- Talk with someone about your feelings – anger, sorrow, and other emotions.
- Don't hold yourself responsible for the disastrous event or be frustrated because you feel that you cannot help directly in the rescue work.
- Take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing. This healthy outlook will help yourself and your family. (i.e., healthy eating, rest, exercise, relaxation, meditation.)
- Maintain a normal household and daily routine, limiting demanding responsibilities.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Participate in memorials, rituals, and use of symbols as a way to express feelings.
- Use existing supports groups of family, friends, and religious affiliations.
- Establish a family emergency plan. Feeling that there is something that you can do is comforting.

Source: National Mental Health Center, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). (2003, April). *Care tips for survivors of a traumatic event: What to expect in your personal, family, work, and financial life* (DHHS Publication No. [SMA] KEN-01-0097). Retrieved August 2, 2007, from <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov>

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