

Responding to a Disaster or Emergency

Experiencing disasters or emergencies can make you feel uncertain and anxious about the future. A single disaster or emergency can create a number of losses at the same time. You may have lost your home, your feeling of safety, or people you know may be missing, injured, or have died. It can be hard to cope when you find yourself in these situations. While you cannot control a stressful situation, you can control how you **REACT** to it.

- R**emove yourself and your loved ones from danger. Finding shelter, water, and food is the first step in helping you cope.
- E**at at regular times to give your body and brain the energy and nutrients needed to cope in stressful situations. Drink water throughout the day to stay focused. Avoid drinks with caffeine (e.g., pop, coffee, tea, energy drinks), they can make you feel anxious or restless and affect your sleep.
- A**ctivity. Regular physical activity boosts your mood, increases your energy, improves your sleep, and helps you connect with others. Just five minutes of physical activity can be enough to make you feel less anxious and can help reduce stress.
- C**onnect. Find ways to help others when you can and accept help from others when you need it. Helping each other builds community and reminds you that you're not alone.
- T**alk. Let friends and family know where you are and how you're doing.

Focus on What Needs to Happen Today

Disasters and emergencies can affect your ability to cope and make decisions. Focus on what needs to happen today.

- Make a list of what you need to do in the next day or week to keep yourself safe and comfortable.
- Break down big challenges into smaller, manageable steps.
- Return to your daily routines as much as possible. Routines like mealtimes, bedtimes, and day-to-day activities can help you feel calm and in control.
- Find a reliable source for updates and information. Remember, to take regular breaks from listening to or watching news reports. Thinking and talking about the events too much can make you feel more stressed.
- Try not to make big decisions when you're feeling stressed or upset.



Everyone experiences and copes with challenges differently. It's common to experience stress in the days or weeks after a disaster or emergency.

Common Stress Reactions

Physical

- muscle tension
- headaches
- stomach problems

Cognitive (Thinking)

- trouble focusing, remembering, or making decisions
- questioning spirituality
- questioning life's purpose or meaning

Emotional

- anxious, scared, or angry
- sad or helpless
- guilt or shame

Behaviour

- feeling on edge or ready to explode
- trouble sleeping or staying asleep
- not wanting to be around others



Important Numbers Available 24/7

Health Link
811

Addiction Helpline
1-866-332-2322

Mental Health Helpline
1-877-303-2642



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