

How to cope with the emotional effects of a disaster

IF YOU have ever survived a disaster, you may understand what other survivors have experienced: shock, denial, confusion, anxiety, and nightmares. Many disheartened and fatigued survivors have little motivation to move on in life.

If your life has been devastated by a disaster, you too may feel that you are near the breaking point. You may even begin to feel that your life is not worth living.

Try to focus on what you still have rather than what you lost.

Avoid making major life decisions.

Get needed rest.

Researchers report that after a traumatic experience, “a lack of quality sleep . . . can exacerbate your trauma symptoms and make it harder to maintain your emotional balance.” Therefore, it is wise to get sufficient rest.

Discuss your feelings.

Confide in a family member or trusted friend. In addition to providing a listening ear, family members or close friends can provide words of encouragement and give practical help.

Communicate your experience. Express what you are feeling in whatever ways feel comfortable to you — such as talking with family or close friends, keeping a diary or engaging in a creative activity (e.g., drawing, molding clay, etc.).

Look ahead to better times.

A person who experiences prolonged stress or severe anxiety may need to seek medical treatment.

Establish or reestablish routines. This can include eating meals at regular times, sleeping and waking on a regular cycle, or following an exercise program. Build in some positive routines to have something to look forward to during these distressing times, like pursuing a hobby, walking through an attractive park or neighborhood, or reading a good book.

Keep a Family Disaster Plan. See link below for a guide.



Additional Mental Health Resources

<https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters>

<https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/talking-to-children>

<https://texashelp.tamu.edu/after-the-flood-emotional-distress-and-how-to-manage-it>

Flood emergency resources in Iowa and Nebraska area:

Iowa

<https://www.redcross.org/local/iowa/about-us/locations/central-iowa.html>

<https://dhs.iowa.gov/disaster-assistance-programs>

<http://iowacommunityaction.org/get-help/programs/>

<http://iowacommunityaction.org/get-help/find-an-agency/>

Nebraska

<https://www.1011now.com/content/news/HOW-TO-HELP-Nebraska-flood-victims-507197401.html>

<https://nema.nebraska.gov/operations/march-2019-flood-information-and-help-links>

<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/flooding.aspx>

<http://business.scottsbluffgering.net/list/member/scotts-bluff-county-volunteer-center-scottsbluff-457>

Disaster Family Planning:

<http://www.scottsbluffcounty.org/documents/emergency-management/family-emergency-plan.pdf>

