



## EMOTIONAL AWARENESS AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER

The aftermath of a natural disaster can include mood swings, sleep disruption and stress reactions. It is important to be alert to how you are feeling so that the emotions do not become overwhelming.

### Protect Your Emotional Well-Being

- Feeling emotional after a disaster is normal, but there are things you can do to take care of yourself and others.
- Find opportunities to spend time with other people so that you stay connected.
- Talk to a trusted friend or adviser about what you are feeling.
- Participate in activities that you enjoy.
- Take frequent breaks from cleanup efforts.
- Write in a journal.
- Exercise (indoors if air quality is poor).
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Practice good sleep hygiene.
- Avoid relying on substance like alcohol or marijuana for stress relief. During times of great stress, their use can be counterproductive and lead to more stress, anxiety, and physical symptoms.



### Help Your Children through the Crisis

Parents are advised to pay close attention to their children's emotional well-being. Pay attention to your child's questions and let them know that you are there to listen. **Here are some tips to keep in mind:**

- Be honest with your answers to your children's questions, but do not provide more information than necessary.
- Validate your children's feelings. They may be feeling scared, confused, or angry.
- Provide opportunities for your children to talk and explore other outlets for them to express themselves like drawing or playing.
- Limit exposure to media.
- Avoid irrational promises like, "This won't happen again."
- Maintain the same daily schedule as possible (e.g., bedtime rituals).
- Ensure that your children are eating healthy food, exercising, and maintaining healthy sleep patterns.

### Watch for Behavior Changes in Your Children

Children may cry more, act out, have some regressive behavior like bed-wetting, or show other changes in demeanor. These are normal stress responses and are usually temporary. Reassure your children that you are there for them. Watch for physical symptoms like stress-related stomach aches and headaches.

### Seek Help if You Need It

It may take a while before you feel back to normal. If you are experiencing any of the following, please seek professional help.

- Difficulty managing your emotions
- Trouble completing daily tasks
- Caring for yourself or your family