

# Mental Health and Stress after an Emergency

## 1. What are some common reactions people have after an emergency?

When an emergency strikes, it is common for people to worry about their safety and the safety of their homes/property, pets and those close to them. Our reactions to an emergency can affect the way we feel, think, and act, for example:

THINK	FEEL	ACT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confused</li> <li>• Nightmares</li> <li>• Disoriented</li> <li>• High or low level of alertness</li> <li>• Can't concentrate</li> <li>• Can't follow simple instructions</li> <li>• Memory problems</li> <li>• Poor problem solving</li> <li>• Can't identify familiar objects or people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chest pain, difficult breathing, or fast heart rate (check with your doctor)</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Nausea/vomiting</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Sweating</li> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Vision problems</li> <li>• Aches and Pains</li> <li>• Chills</li> <li>• Clammy skin</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Trouble hearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guilt</li> <li>• Grief</li> <li>• Denial</li> <li>• Severe panic (rare)</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Worry</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Sense of failure</li> <li>• Feeling overwhelmed</li> <li>• Blaming others or self</li> <li>• Hopelessness</li> <li>• Frustration</li> <li>• Isolation</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Can't rest</li> <li>• Impulsive/risk-taking</li> <li>• Argumentative or violent</li> <li>• Distracted</li> <li>• Higher use of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs</li> </ul>

## 2. What can you do for yourself?

- Understand that it is normal to feel worry and stress after an emergency.
- Recognize that you did not have control over this situation. Remind yourself of the ways that you are gaining control of your situation and helping lower your anxiety. For example, "I am taking medicine and learning more about what to do."
- Turn to family, friends, and spiritual support, and talk about your experiences and feelings with them.
- Get back to the routines of your life as soon as you can.

## 3. What can you do for your child?

TIP	EXAMPLES
<b>Help your children feel safe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check in with them.</li> <li>• Let them talk about their fears and worries.</li> <li>• Stick to family routines that help them feel comfortable and secure.</li> <li>• Reassure them that parents, teachers, doctors, and government officials are doing their best to keep them safe and healthy.</li> </ul>
<b>Limit the time kids spend watching the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kids may be frightened, overwhelmed, or traumatized by news reports.</li> <li>• Supervise what they watch on TV. Have a family discussion during and after viewing to let them express their fears and concerns.</li> </ul>
<b>Arm yourself with the facts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your kids will be less fearful if they see that you are not afraid and if you spend time with them answering all their questions.</li> </ul>

If you or members of your family have trouble coping, ask for help. At work, you may be able to get help from your human resources department or your company's Employee Assistance Program. Call a counselor or mental health professional at the **Department of Mental Health 1-800-854-7771**. You can also contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) **Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746**.

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