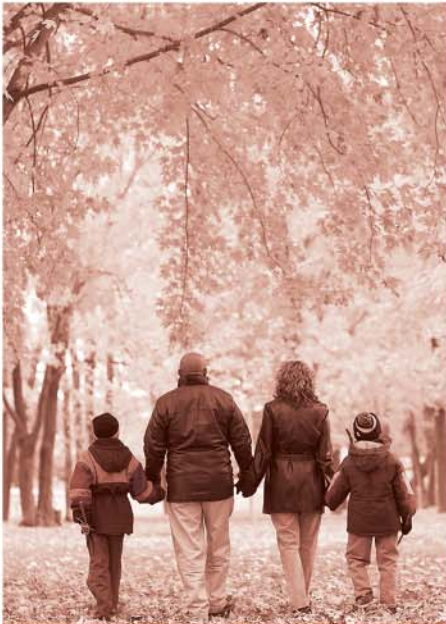


# Tips for Survivors of a Traumatic Event

## Managing Your Stress During a Disaster



### Know When to Get Help

Sometimes things become so overwhelming that you need help from a mental health professional. If you or someone you know threatens to hurt or kill him/herself or another person; looks for ways to kill him/herself; talks or writes about death, dying, or suicide; feels rage, uncontrolled anger, or desires revenge; or shows signs of stress (listed on the previous page) for several days or weeks, GET HELP.

### What You Should Know

When you are exposed to stressful events, be aware of how these events can affect you personally. Most people show signs of stress after the event. These signs are normal. As your life gets back to normal in future months, they should decrease. After a stressful event, monitor your own physical and mental health. Know the signs of stress in yourself and your loved ones. Know how to relieve stress. And know when to get help.

### Know the Signs of Stress

#### *Your Behavior:*

- An increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- An increase in your alcohol or tobacco use
- An increase of irritability, with outbursts of anger and frequent arguing
- Having trouble relaxing or sleeping
- Crying frequently
- Worrying excessively
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- Blaming other people for everything

- Having difficulty communicating or listening
- Having difficulty giving or accepting help
- Inability to feel pleasure or have fun

#### *Your Body:*

- Having stomach aches or diarrhea
- Having headaches and other pains
- Losing your appetite or eating too much
- Sweating or having chills
- Getting tremors or muscle twitches
- Being easily startled

#### *Your Emotions:*

- Being anxious or fearful
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling heroic, euphoric, or invulnerable
- Not caring about anything
- Feeling overwhelmed by sadness

#### *Your Thinking:*

- Having trouble remembering things
- Feeling confused
- Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Having difficulty making decisions



## Information Clearinghouses

*National Mental Health Information Center (NMHIC)*  
P.O. Box 42557, Washington, DC 20015  
(800) 789-2647 (English and Español)  
(866) 889-2647 (TDD)  
[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)

*National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)*  
P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345  
(800) 729-6686 (English and Español)  
(800) 487-4889 (TDD)  
[www.ncadi.samhsa.gov](http://www.ncadi.samhsa.gov)

## Treatment Locators

*Mental Health Services Locator*  
(800) 789-2647 (English and Español)  
(866) 889-2647 (TDD)  
[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases)

*Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator*  
(800) 662-HELP (4357) (Toll-Free,  
24-Hour English and Español Treatment Referral Service)  
(800) 487-4889 (TDD)  
[www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov)

## Hotlines

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline*  
(800) 273-TALK (8255)

*SAMHSA National Helpline*  
(800) 662-HELP (4357) (English and Español)  
(800) 487-4889 (TDD)

*Workplace Helpline*  
(800) WORKPLACE (967-5752)  
[www.workplace.samhsa.gov/helpline/helpline.htm](http://www.workplace.samhsa.gov/helpline/helpline.htm)

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## Know How to Relieve Stress

You can manage and alleviate your stress by taking time to take care of yourself.

### *Keep Yourself Healthy:*

- Eat healthy foods and drink water
- Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol
- Do not use tobacco or illegal drugs
- Get enough sleep and rest
- Get physical exercise

### *Use Practical Ways to Relax:*

- Relax your body often by things that work for you—take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, or wash your face and hands
- Pace yourself between stress activities—do a fun thing after a hard task
- Use time off to relax—eat a good meal, read, listen to music, take a bath, and talk to family
- Talk about your feelings to loved ones and friends often

### *Pay Attention to Your Body, Feelings, and Spirit:*

- Recognize and heed early warning signs of stress
- Recognize how your own past experiences affect your way of handling this event, and think of how you handled past events
- Take time to renew your spirit by meditation, prayer, and helping others in need

### *Have a Plan to Manage Your Tasks:*

- Do the important things first. Find a safe place to stay. Get water and food. Tell family where you are and how they can contact you. Get papers for your property, insurance, bank, medical records, and job qualifications from the agencies if you lost them in the disaster. Know that it will take time to get your life in order.
- Know that “waiting” alternates with being “overwhelmed.” Be patient with yourself and others.