



COPING WITH A HURRICANE

A natural disaster such as a hurricane can cause a variety of reactions. While people react differently in uncertain situations, some common reactions for those who are unable to contact family and friends in a disaster include anxiety, powerlessness and insecurity. Difficulty making decisions and irritability may increase. These feelings are normal given the intensity of the current disaster. While feeling stressed is normal, there are things we can do to improve coping. Knowing what to expect can also help to normalize experiences and reduce stress.

Emotional Reactions

Some of us will have family, friends or loved ones impacted by the disaster, and many of us will not – but in either event, we are deeply touched by the plight of the storm victims. Watching and hearing events unfold through the media may cause reactions including:

- Numbness
- Anxiety, apprehension
- Sadness
- Increased vulnerability
- Fear, decreased sense of safety
- Grief
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Irritability
- Anger

Cognitive Reactions

Anxiety and worry can impact thinking and perception of the event in the following ways:

- Disbelief
- Difficulty concentrating
- Repeated thoughts about prior disasters or traumatic experiences
- Intrusive thoughts and images
- Confusion and forgetfulness

What You Can do to Help Yourself

There are many practical things you can do to feel better during this difficult time. Here are some suggestions:

- Take breaks from the media reports. Staying abreast of what is happening increases feelings of control; however, constant images of the disaster can become emotionally overwhelming.
- Allow yourself to feel things; the plight of the storm victims touches our emotions. Sadness and concern for others is a normal reaction.
- Talk to others about your feelings.

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- Think back to other stressful times in your life. What helped you then? Can you do similar things now?
- Spend time with others, especially people who make you feel comfortable, safe or secure. Ask support if you need it.
- Give yourself permission to do the things you enjoy and focus on those things.
- Try to maintain a schedule. An event such as a hurricane can be an abnormal event and may disrupt our normal routines. By maintaining routines, we can have a greater sense of control of our lives.
- Take necessary precautions, but don't overdo it. A natural disaster of this magnitude reminds us of the importance of proper planning. This is a good time to develop or review an emergency communication plan and make sure that you have access to essential supplies such as a first aid kit, food, water, battery operated flashlight and radio.

How Can I Help those affected by the disaster?

Disaster relief agencies throughout the nation are rallying aid for those needing basic services, medical attention and temporary shelter. Charitable organizations recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Association Agency (FEMA) include:

- American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund at (800)435-7669
- Catholic Charities, USA at (800)919-9338
- Salvation Army at (800)725-2769

For a comprehensive list of relief agencies and information, please visit

http://www.networkforgood.org/topics/animal_envirom/hurricanes/

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