

Coping Facts for ADULTS

When disasters such as storms, fires, or tornadoes occur, people experience considerable losses. Even the threat of a disaster or terrorism can be stressful. The stress and emotions of disasters are normal reactions to the situation.

▼ Normal Reactions

Each of us will respond in our own unique way. In time, we will recover and return to “normal” in a matter of days or weeks—sooner if we take care of ourselves. However, it is not uncommon to experience the following reactions:

Feeling Overwhelmed	Anger	Crying
Sleep Disturbances	Withdrawal	Fatigue
Recurring Images of the Disaster	Depression	

▼ Taking Care of Ourselves

- Seek support from family, friends, and colleagues. Sometimes those who know you cannot appreciate the extent of what you have been through; therefore, they can appear unsympathetic. In this case, look for support from others.
- Help others by sharing thoughts and checking out how they are doing.
- Make use of available community services.
- Resorting to alcohol, drugs or overeating adds to stress levels and interferes with physical and emotional well being. Healthy routines are important for recovery.
- Exercise, alternated with relaxation, will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Keep a journal.
- Structure your time, keep busy. Being alone is probably not what is needed.
- Continue your daily schedule at work and leisure activities whenever possible.
- Expect time to be the ultimate healer. Talk to a professional if the wait seems too long for you or if you need immediate assistance.

▼ When to Seek Professional Assistance

Everyone copes differently with a disaster, but sometime we need help to get through it. Ask for help if you need it, especially when:

- Things are falling apart: marital problems, family conflict, loss of friendships, problems at work or school.
- There is no medical explanation for chronic physical problems.
- Preoccupation with the tragic event interferes with life activities.
- Isolation and fear cause feelings of desperation.
- Experiencing feelings of hopelessness, depression, or extreme anger.
- You are reliant on alcohol or other drugs.

For more information,
contact the
Missouri Department of
Mental Health
Office of
Disaster Readiness
1706 East Elm
P.O. Box 687
Jefferson City, MO 65102
573-751-4122
www.dmh.mo.gov



*From Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC).*

<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/EmergencyServices/>