

STRESS REACTIONS and COPING TOOLS for DISASTER

April, 2009

Disaster affects people in a variety of ways. All of these responses are normal reactions to an abnormal situation, which can persist for weeks after the disaster.

DISASTER REACTIONS

Disaster can affect you physically

Changes in appetite and digestive problems. Difficulty in sleeping. Fatigue and lack of energy. Headaches. Other aches and pains. Allergies and sinus problems. Colds and flu.

Disaster can affect you emotionally

Irritability and anger. Feeling down or depressed. Apathy. Suspiciousness. Crying for no apparent Reason. Frustration. Feeling powerless over the future. Feeling overwhelmed. Moodiness. Irritability. Anxiety about the future. Guilt. Rejection of others' help. Isolation from friends and family.

Disaster can affect your children

Clinging to parent. Reluctance to go to bed. Nightmares. Enactment of the disaster in play. Crying. Withdrawal. Refusal to leave home. Problems at school or child care. Inability to concentrate.

COPING TOOLS FOR MANAGING DISASTER-RELATED STRESS

Remember the 3 R's

Rest

Take time to sleep or rest.
Take time to relax with friends and family.
Remember that taking care of yourself gives you the energy necessary to take care of others.

Routine

Being in a routine is comforting to mind and body, and especially helpful for children
Even with changing circumstances, having a routine for meals and rest is important

Relationships

Spend time with others. Talk about your feelings. Others probably experience the same feelings.
Help others in your community. Ask your friends and neighbors how they are doing.
Be tolerant of irritability, poor concentration, and other common reactions to stress.
Maintain a friendly attitude - a smile can go a long way to brightening someone's day.

WHEN AND WHERE CAN I GO FOR HELP?

Seek help when:

Symptoms are highly debilitating or life-threatening (persistent hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, disorientation, extreme emotional reactions, self-neglect). Symptoms worsen over time, or persist at a high level for over a month. Other life circumstances intensify stress (loss of a loved one, divorce, financial crisis).

Phone resources: Call FirstLink 701-235-7335 or call **2-1-1** for Information, Referral or Crisis Management Services. These numbers are FREE, confidential, 24/7 and also available for supportive listening.

On-line resources: www.extension.umn.edu (Click Floods and Rain). www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension (Click Flood Information). www.apahelpcenter.org.