

AFTER THE DISASTER¹

There are a number of **personal responses to disaster that are common and normal** to experience.

Some **common responses** are:

- Irritability/Anger
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Inability to sleep
- Nightmares
- Shock or disbelief
- Sadness
- Headaches or nausea
- Hyperactivity
- Lack of concentration
- Increased alcohol or drug consumption
- Feeling numb

Many disaster victims, survivors and rescue personnel will have at least one of the above responses. **Acknowledging your feelings and stresses** is the first step to feeling better. Other **helpful actions** include:

- Talk or write about your disaster experiences. Sharing your feelings rather than holding them in will help you feel better about the experience.
- Take time off from cares, worries, and home repairs. Engage in recreation, relaxation, or a favorite hobby. Getting away from home for a day or a few hours with close friends also can help.
- Pay attention to your health, a good diet, and adequate sleep. Relaxation exercises may help if you have difficulty sleeping.
- Prepare for possible future emergencies to help lessen feelings of helplessness and to achieve peace of mind.
- Rebuild personal relationships in addition to repairing other aspects of your life. Couples should make time to be alone together, to talk, and to have fun.

If stress, anxiety, depression, or physical problems continue or start interfering significantly with your daily life, you may wish to contact your doctor or mental health professional.

¹ Adapted from <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/dtac/AftertheDisaster.asp> 2004